A WHITE CIRCLE CRIME CLUB

SHROUD OF DARKNESS

E. C. R. LORAC

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THE fog-bound train from Exeter crawled slowly towards Paddington. Sarah Dillon had made friends with the attractive boy who shared a compartment with herself and the formidable "writing" lady in the corner. The train made an unscheduled stop at Reading, due to the thick "London Particular" which had spread out far to the West; there the compartment was invaded by two more men, one a prosperous business man, the other an obvious spiv. The boy Sarah had befriended seemed to become rattled and withdrawn after Reading. Had he something to fear from the newcomers to their compartment? Sarah could not guess, nor did she attach much significance to the boy's words when the train reached Paddington; when he seemed suddenly to recognise one of his fellow-passengers. Minutes later the boy had his head bashed in while still in the station. His pockets had been emptied to hide his identity, and his assailant had vanished in the swirling fog. From such slender information Chief Inspector MacDonald had to work. Other crimes followed, and his enquiries took him to Devon and to a pub of doubtful reputation in North London. He got his man at last in an exciting and surprising climax on board a Channel steamer. This story will grip you throughout and have you guessing to the end.

They were five strangers on a fogbound train—
a psychiatrist's pretty secretary,
an agitated young man,
a tweedy lady with a deep voice,
a stockbrokerish businessman,
and an eel-like "spiv."

One was brutally attacked in the choking
black fog at Paddington Station.

Attempted murder became bona fide manslaughter,
and examination of the intimate lives
of the passengers involved Chief Inspector Macdonald
in a macabre game of hide-and-seek
in which one man had tried to find his identity,
and another was ready to kill to preserve
the shroud of darkness that obscured his.

SHROUD OF DARKNESS

by

E. C. R. LORAC

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FOR GLADYS RIVETT

Dear Gladys,

It seems appropriate that this one should be dedicated to you, because I started it in the Cornish Riviera Express, when you and I travelled from Penzance to Plymouth together and talked about "the Moor." We both know that journey so well, and this story is a souvenir of it, to remind you of many pleasant places, not forgetting the view across the Teign to Shaldon and the Estuary at Starcross.

E.C.R.L.

SHROUD OF DARKNESS

CHAPTER ONE

"WHERE ARE WE NOW?" asked Sarah. She had been asleep awhile, lost in one of those uneasy dozes through which the sound and movement of the train had penetrated and become muddled up with her dreams. As she stretched herself she was aware that the boy in the opposite corner had been watching her in that queer, disturbing way she had noticed throughout the journey: he looked away quickly when she woke up, as though he felt guilty that it wasn't fair to stare at a girl who went to sleep in the train.

"Are we nearly at Paddington?" she asked, turning to the window. The glass mocked her with her own blurred image against the blackness of impenetrable fog outside. The boy turned to his own window and rubbed its misted surface.

"No. We haven't got to Reading yet," he answered. "I think we're somewhere between Newbury and Reading—but we might be anywhere. It's pretty thick, isn't it?"

"Beastly," agreed Sarah. "London will be a poem. How late are we?"

He looked down at his wrist watch. "Nearly an hour late—and it'll get worse nearer to London." He hesitated, and then asked in that gentle, diffident way which made him so likeable: "Does it worry you? . . . Perhaps somebody's meeting you at Paddington, and waiting on a platform in a fog is pretty dreary."

"No. Nobody's meeting me," said Sarah crisply. "I think meeting trains is a mug's game. And it doesn't worry me, either. I can get home by tube, nearly all the way. It's just that it's a bore being late." Then, feeling that she had been rather brusque, she added: "It's been such a nice journey: it's a shame to have it spoilt by fog at the end."

She saw his face lighten, and a smile flicker on his mobile lips. "Yes, rather. It was grand along the coast and up the Exe estuary. I'm sorry about the fog—but it's been a good journey."

He turned to the window again and stared at the opaque glass, and Sarah shrugged back into her corner and closed her eyes again. She had finished her

book, finished The *Times* crossword, and she didn't want to talk. Above all, she didn't want to watch the boy opposite her. She had liked him so much as they had stood in the corridor and watched the pale December sunshine over the sea at Teignmouth, the sand hills at Dawlish Warren and the shining estuary at Starcross.

His name was Richard: he had told Sarah that, though whether Richard were his Christian name or surname she had not enquired. He was about her own age (Sarah was nearly twenty-one) for he had told her that he had just finished his military service. His home was in Devon, somewhere near Plymouth. Sarah's home was near Kingsbridge, and she and Richard had talked happily about their favourite holiday haunts in Devon and Cornwall. She had liked his voice, and his slow, pleasant speech, which sometimes quickened in eagerness and developed a very slight stutter. If only the journey had ended punctually and normally, Sarah would have remembered Richard as that nice boy in the train. But when the mist had closed down on them near Taunton, she had become aware of a sense of constraint. She had a queer, inexplicable feeling that he wanted to tell her something and couldn't get it out, so that his easy speech had broken down into abrupt disconnected negatives and affirmatives and he had tended to stare out into the mist, go silent, and then try to talk again.

It wasn't a sentimental sort of crisis, thought Sarah, who was a very clear-headed young woman. She had experienced that sort of thing—the stuttering embarrassment of an impressionable youth, and the odious eroticism of elderly philanderers. It was more as though the boy were making a desperate effort to remember something and appealing to her for help.

"Damn," said Sarah to herself. "It comes of working for a psychiatrist and typing out case histories. I'm getting case-minded. Can it, do . . ."

She took refuge in verbal memory, concentrating on familiar lines, for she could always lose herself in poetry: and then she could have boxed her own ears, because her mind produced "To be or not to be . . and Hamlet's soliloquy imposed itself on the slow grind of train noises in a fog.

2

"Goodness! Have we really got somewhere?" asked Sarah as the train bumped to a standstill and a blur of light brightened the misted windows.

"Reading—thank God!"

The abrupt remark came from the middle-aged woman who was the only other occupant of the compartment. She sat in a corner seat, back to the engine, on the same side as the boy, and she had been writing steadily ever since she got in the train at Exeter. With a large, businesslike writing block on her knees she had been writing with a speed and ease which seemed to Sarah almost miraculous, undeterred by bumps or swaying. Her voice was very deep, and Sarah repressed a desire to grin, having already observed that the writer's physiognomy was non-committal, in as much as it might as well have been a man's face as a woman's.

"It's not quite so thick here," said the boy, and then the carriage door opened and cold fog swept in, heralding two more passengers—both men—who sat down on Sarah's side, facing the engine. The writer glared at them both, as though their entry were a personal affront, gathered her sheets of paper together, and began to read her script with the same appearance of concentration which characterised her writing.

Sarah turned to the boy. "Will you lend me your book—if you don't want to read it yourself?" she asked. "At the rate we're going it may last me till Paddington."

"Yes, rather, of course," he said hastily. "It's jolly good. I've read it before, so you can keep it if you don't finish it."

The book was a Penguin edition of Josephine Tey's *Franchise Affair,* and as he handed it over, Sarah grinned at him. "Thanks a lot. You can have mine. Oh . . . we're off again. Here's hoping!"

She settled down with the book—which she found entrancing—and managed to forget her sense of discomfort for a while. Then the train drew to another halt and she glanced up. The boy was not looking at her this time; he was staring at the two men who had got in at Reading, and there was something in his strained, concentrated stare which made Sarah shiver.

"Oh dear," she thought, "there is something odd about him. He looks as though he's going through absolute hell . . . or as though he's going to have a fit. Heavens above, not a fit in a fogbound train. . . . It'd be just too grim."

She tried to read again, found that the words meant nothing, and decided to go along the corridor and have a wash. Anything was better than sitting there, trying not to watch that unhappy, strained face opposite. She stood up and reached for her grip on the luggage rack, pulling out sponge bag and towel. As she did so she glanced at the two men who were sitting on her own

side of the carriage. One was a heavy, middle-aged fellow, a prosperous businessman, she guessed, like thousands of others. He was reading an evening paper, his chin sunk on his chest, his eyes downcast; he might be reading or dozing, but he was taking no interest in anybody else. The second man was young, with dark brows and slicked-back hair, wearing clothes that had a cheap smartness and a tie that made Sarah think "Spiv," an odious youth. He glanced up at Sarah with bright, calculating eyes, at once bold and furtive.

She turned away, thinking "If he isn't a bad lot I'll eat my hat. Cosh boy or the equivalent . . . something revolting about him."

She walked along the corridor, found that both hot and cold taps functioned—rather grittily—and washed away some of the railway grime. Then she stood for a while in the corridor, thankful that the train was at least still trying and that the greater frequency of blurred lights meant that they were nearing the suburbs. She smoked a couple of cigarettes, and did not go back to her seat until she was pretty sure that the train was approaching Paddington Station: detonators and signalmen with flares seemed to indicate the last lap—and quite time, too. It was nearly nine o'clock.

The boy was sitting very still, staring at the floor between his feet, and he took no notice of Sarah, who began to pack up her scattered belongings, get on her topcoat and gloves, and make a final attempt to read as the train ground on, more and more slowly, and eventually came to a standstill.

The writing lady gave vent to another sepulchral "Thank God!" let down the window, and blocked the door with her massive, tailored bulk. The platform was on her side and she alighted with surprising celerity, considering her bulk, to be followed by the two men who had got in at Reading. The boy was standing up, but he made no offer to help Sarah lift her suitcase down: he almost leapt at the open door, calling: "I say, wait a minute. Haven't we . . ."

His voice was lost as he jumped on to the platform.

"Well!" thought Sarah. "Manners not ingrain—but he didn't have a fit. For these and all Thy other mercies, etc. What a night! I hope to God the tube hasn't given up. It really is about the ultimate limit."

3

Constable Buller, on duty at Paddington Station that same foggy evening (and exceedingly fed up with the job, for his relief hadn't turned up), had just

helped to sort out a private car from a taxi in the station approach. There had been a lot of bad language, and much roaring of engines and exhaust fumes as the two vehicles disengaged their bumpers and contrived to creep off under their own power into the murk ahead. Buller was just turning for another patrol across the arrival end of the station when he almost bumped into a pair of louts who appeared out of the fog from the Praed Street end of the carriageway. Buller was an observant fellow and he recognised the taller of the two toughs; the chap had been hanging around Number One platform and Buller suspected "intent," the intent being connected with any suitcase or gear left unguarded for a moment in the fog. Immediately on seeing the policeman's uniform the pair took to their heels; bolting like rabbits, they disappeared into the fog in the direction of Bishop's Road. Buller's immediate reaction was that they weren't carrying anything; if either of them had had a parcel or suitcase he would have given chase, but the very fact that they had bolted made him suspicious.

"Up to no good . . . but what scared them?" he asked himself. Pulling out his torch, he walked in the direction the louts had come from, towards the head of the approach footway, where some barrows and trolleys had been pushed out of the way by porters and goods yardmen. Normal traffic was so disorganised that the usual loading and unloading of evening traffic had gone all haywire. Buller flashed his torch carefully around, aware that he felt alone in the world, cut off by the fog from the light and movement of the booking hall, where indeterminate would-be travellers argued about their chances of getting anywhere at all on a night like this. It wasn't very long before Buller found the explanation of the youths' precipitate flight. A man's body lay face-down on the ground, partially concealed by a trolley which had been pushed up against it. Bending to investigate, Buller caught his breath.

"My God . . . it's bloody murder."

He was an experienced policeman, but the mess of blood around the shattered head gave him a moment of horrified surprise. He hadn't expected anything like this. He bent to touch one of the outflung hands, got his fingers round the wrist, and found to his astonishment that the man wasn't dead. Then he heard the tramp of feet approaching him, straightened up, and heard a familiar voice: "Ruddy night, not half. What you got there, chum? Christ . . . what a——"

It was a ticket inspector on evening duty, a man named Willing, whom Buller knew well.

"He's still alive," said Buller. "It's only just happened. Look here, you go along and get the station announcer to ask if there's a doctor on the station. There's still hundreds of folk milling around. It's a chance. We can't get a police surgeon out in time, and he's only a young chap."

"Oke. I'll see to it—and I'll send an inspector along with a first-aid box."

Willing hurried off, and Buller looked down unhappily at the prostrate form. He knew a bit about first-aid, he'd taken the St. John's Ambulance course: he could fit a splint and apply a tourniquet, but how to begin on a head injury like that he just didn't know.

"He can't be alive," he thought to himself, and bent again to investigate. But he was alive: faint and slow but steady, the pulse was ticking on.

Buller heard the loud-speaker, every amplifier in the station calling the same message: "Attention, please. If there is a doctor on the station, please go at once to the Booking Hall, to Window A, first-class ticket office. Attention, please . . ."

The response came remarkably quickly: Willing, carrying the first-aid box, then an inspector beside a sturdy, middle-aged man in a bowler hat, carrying a case. A second torchlight was switched on and the doctor bent over the casualty.

"Suffering cats! How the blazes . . he exclaimed.

"He's still alive," said Buller obstinately, "at least he was half a minute ago."

"He still is—though he oughtn't to be," said the doctor.

Willing opened the first-aid case and in the light of the torches a pad was applied and fixed, a hypodermic filled, and an injection given. The inspector was talking about an ambulance.

"Ambulance be translated: they can't get an ambulance through this," said the doctor tersely. "There are busses and cars all over the pavement—my own amongst them. You've got a wheeled stretcher, haven't you? Go and get it. I'll help shove. We'll take him to St. Monica's—it's only just round the comer. My name's Maxwell, incidentally."

"Very good, sir," said the inspector, and hastened off.

Dr. Maxwell turned to Buller, who asked anxiously: "He can't live, can he, Doctor?—not with his skull battered like that."

"You never know; the point is that he's alive, against all probabilities. I'm hoping Horrocks will be at the hospital. This is just his cup of tea; he'll do a lovely job if we can only get him on to it in time. What the surgeons can do with brains these days just beats the band. What do you reckon he was hit

with, Officer?"

Buller was hunting around in the beam of his torch, and after a moment he replied gruffly: "This. They've been straightening the kerbstones: left their gear about, because there was a fog. You can't trust any of the chaps these days."

The object he raised was a heavy iron lever, over two feet long, such as is used for raising paving stones and similar weights. The blood on one end of it showed plainly enough what it had been used for.

"One thing's clear enough," said the doctor. "The intention was to kill: this isn't a cosh boy's trick, it's deliberate murder—only we may cheat the murderer yet. Ah, here they are."

Two railway officials, the faithful Willing, and Buller's "relief mate" came up together with the stretcher. The senior official said:

"I've rung the Paddington police, Buller: their chaps are on the way. Strong here is to stand by at this spot. Will you go with the stretcher and get the casualty identified?"

Before Buller had time to reply, Dr. Maxwell cut in: "That's all fine, I've no doubt, but you chaps can lend a hand and let the red tape go. I want these trolleys out of the way and the stretcher beside him—here. Don't argue. This patient's alive—just. We don't want him to die while you're havering about detection. Right. That's it. Now who's learnt to lift a stretcher case? Good, two of you, and me at the head—and his life depends on careful handling. Careful, careful. . ."

They got the long-limbed fellow on to the stretcher, sweating in the chill, dank air from the effort to synchronise their movements, and the doctor arranged pads to steady the head before they lifted the stretcher back on to its wheeled carriage. Willing undertook to walk ahead with a police torch, Buller pushed the stretcher, and Dr. Maxwell, with another torch, walked alongside. So they proceeded up the carriageway, while the thickest "London particular" for half a century swirled round them, noisome, poisonous, terrifying: a monster of a fog, strangling all movement in the streets, weighing down the cheerful, terrifying the fearful, dealing death to the frail.

". . . tons to the square yard . . . carbon deposit, sulphur dioxide, and what have you . . . civilisation? It's a damned scandal," grumbled the doctor.

A moment after the sound of the doctor's voice had died away, when the tramp of the constable's boots was only an echo in the fog, there was another movement in the station approach, only it was so silent that the newly arrived

Constable Strong hadn't a chance of hearing it: as for seeing it, visibility was now officially nil. Under the arc lamps you could recognise a familiar face a yard from you, but away from the direct glare the fog triumphed. It was a blanket: a fortunate blanket for the man who squirmed like a reptile between the wall and a row of trolleys, not six feet from the place where the casualty had lain. This fellow had been lying on his face under the trolleys, as thin and flat a human snake as ever took cover in a dark corner. He knew he'd got to get out, now, before the other Paddington police arrived; he'd had luck so far. Buller had been preoccupied with the casualty, and the two runaways had distracted his attention. But in another minute the others would arrive. Crawling, writhing, with hammering heart and clammy face, the weedy fellow wormed his way out: only a coupla' yards and he'd risk getting up and running. No one could swear to anything on a night like this. Clear of the trolleys, he crouched on all fours for a second, heard a woman's voice raised in nervous protest: "It's no use, dear. I simply can't face it. I'd rather sit in the station all night."

"O.K." thought the human snake. "This is where I can make it." And make it he did, another shadow in the murk, his mind busy with one thought only: "What's it worth to me. What's it worth? . . ."

4

Once inside the great hospital, Constable Buller became a mere cipher, just something getting in the way of busy people. He was used to it. Most policemen have to sit beside hospital beds in the course of their duty at one time or another, generally in charge of attempted suicides. They don't like it: the nurses don't like it: the other patients don't like it, and the bored policemen get their only variety from the cups of tea which are brewed for them in ward kitchens or sisters' cubbyholes. But Buller hadn't even got a bed to sit beside. It was his job to wait for the clothes stripped from the casualty in order to examine the contents of the pockets and discover name and address. Dr. Maxwell, on the contrary, became a person of importance as soon as he stepped inside the hospital: he was obviously well known there: Casualty Department leapt to his bidding: the stretcher was wheeled away with the swiftness of extreme competence and happy obedience among murmurs of Operating Theatre Sister, number so and so, housemen, anaesthetist, and Mr.

Horrocks, Horrocks, Horrocks. . . .

Buller felt a little cynical. He had been in a number of out-patients departments, and not always had his casualty attained priority. It wasn't a poor ruddy policeman these nurses jumped for, he contemplated. It was the doctor. "Well, it's what they're trained to do, I suppose," he thought, "but I'd never've believed a hospital sister'd hop it like that. They'll have that Horrocks on the poor blighter's brain faster than they'd put a stitch in anyone else."

They told Buller to keep out of the way . . . until somebody (a probationer) said something about the doorman and a cup of tea.

It was about an hour later (or several cups of tea later) that a saucy young thing in immaculate uniform and bright cherry lipstick told Buller he could collect the laundry.

"And there's nothing in any of the pockets," she added cheerfully. "Not a sausage. We noticed it at once. And there won't be any laundry marks, either, because his shirt and pants are quite new. But he's doing nicely. Theatre Sister says it's a lovely job."

"Nothing in any of the pockets," said Buller. "You shouldn't have——"

"Oh, don't get upstage," she replied blithely. "You'd better go to the office. They want a name of some sort. Yours might do. We're calling him Waterloo, because you found him at Paddington and he nearly got his anyway, didn't he? Waterloo . . . it'll look lovely on his chart."

Buller collected one raincoat, flannel bags, tweed coat, and waistcoat, new collar, tie, shirt, vest, pants, braces, socks, shoes. "Just demobbed," he hazarded. "They often grow out of their clothes. Not a . . . what was it she said, the young Jezebel. Not a sausage. That's a funny thing, that is. Waterloo, indeed."

CHAPTER TWO

"WELL, THAT'S THE way of it," said the Paddington Superintendent of Police to Chief Inspector Macdonald, C.I.D. "It looks like being one of those interminable jobs. Our chaps have all got three hands full and then some, so if C.O. will take this one on it'll help a lot." He paused and then went on: "You'll be seeing the surgeon yourself: Horrocks his name is, and he's a very helpful, intelligent fellow. That's leaving his professional reputation aside—I believe he's a top-notcher. He says his guess is that the lad was knocked out with a straight one on the point—knocked right out—and his pockets looted. Then he was deliberately hit over the head with that iron bar while he was down, the bar being swung bludgeon-wise. Horrocks says his pockets couldn't have been searched after he was bludgeoned, because turning him over would have killed him."

"I'm quite willing to take Horrocks's opinion on the matter," said Macdonald, and the Super nodded, hearing the dry tone.

"Yes. A dirty business—cold-blooded brutality. And there's not a thing on him to give us a lead as to who the lad is. His clothes are nearly new: mass-produced, all of them, obtainable in any town from Land's End to John o' Groats. It seems likely that he's straight out of the Forces—if he's British. We don't even know that. And as to whether he was just going to the station, or coming away from the station, or meeting someone for a quiet talk, or doing some dirty work on his own—well, it's anybody's guess. And no one of his description has been reported missing."

Macdonald nodded. No one was better qualified than he was to know that until a victim has been identified the police have no solid ground beneath their feet. An unknown victim attacked by an unknown assailant spells the detective's Waterloo (the young nurse's name for the nameless patient in St. Monica's had gone all round the local police). This victim was not only nameless: he had been struck down in London's famous fog: that evening of solid black-out when nobody noticed anybody.

"It's not only a negative, it's a fogged negative," said Macdonald.

The Super chuckled. "True enough. Now, for what it's worth the surgeon said he'd have placed the boy as decent middle class—professional class rather than working class. He was clean, well-kept hands and feet, healthy and wholesome, an outdoor rather than indoor type. Not a tough or a lout or a lounge lizard. No sign that he smoked or drank. A nice-looking chap, the nurses said—you can't see much now but bandages."

"I think I'll go and have a look at him," said Macdonald. "We shall have to get the Press and the B.B.C. to issue descriptions. Somebody may have noticed him somewhere—the policeman's abiding hope."

"It often works," said the Super. "Well, here's wishing you luck—and I'll get back to my juvenile delinquents. If I'd been told when I was a raw constable that gangs of twelve-year-olds were going to give me a headache I wouldn't have believed it. We had a tough of ten last week—robbery with violence, can you beat it?"

Macdonald set out for St. Monica's Hospital. It was still foggy, but not with the standstill blackness of last night. Today traffic moved slowly through yellow curtains of grime, grinding along in a convalescent sort of way and jerking to a standstill occasionally, when tired drivers got the gremlins and saw nightmare shapes looming up through the eye-stinging abomination which usurped the air.

Arrived at the hospital, Macdonald was sent up to Lister Ward, where Staff Nurse was slightly obstructive to begin with, but eventually decided that the quiet-voiced C.I.D. man was to be trusted. Lister was a small ward, and a very quiet one. Its quietude was a little ominous, for the patients here had no energy to complain; what energy was left to them was directed to the primary business of keeping alive.

The nameless casualty was in the bed in the far corner, screened from observation. Macdonald stood just within the screens and studied what the bandages permitted: chin, mouth, and nose. It was a comely face, he judged: firm chin and jaw, close, well-cut lips, almost smiling in their stillness. Whatever the lad might suffer later, thought Macdonald, he wasn't suffering now. The tubes and tentacles of a blood-transfusion apparatus were beside him and Macdonald could see one relaxed hand, with long fingers and neatly cut nails. This interested him, because one of the fingernails showed a black mark of some previous injury—a week or more old. Any such detail might help in identifying him. Macdonald stood there for quite a long time: the boy

must be alive, he knew, but he hardly looked alive. Only the closest observation showed the slow rise and fall of his breathing.

The nurse seemed to read his thought. "He's doing very nicely," she said evenly. "His pulse is really good."

Macdonald smiled at her. "Thank you, Sister. I hope he'll continue to be a credit to you. Now could I see one of the nurses who got him ready for the theatre? Or would they be on night duty, and asleep now?"

"Well, they would be in the ordinary way," she replied, "but this was an emergency case and very urgent. One of the theatre nurses didn't get back because of the fog and Nurse Bland came back on duty, though she'd been on full time. Well, never mind that. If you want to see her, you'd better ask Matron, but she's in Simpson Ward."

It wasn't very long before Macdonald was taken to the sisters' office of Simpson Ward, and a comfortable-looking, middle-aged staff nurse came and looked at him enquiringly.

"I'm sorry to bother you, Nurse. I know you're always busy," said Macdonald. "I'm a C.I.D. officer. It's about this lad with the head injury who was operated on last night. Did you undress him?"

"Nurse Stone and I did it together. We had to be very careful. I expect you saw we cut his things off: we couldn't move him."

"Yes. I realise that. I've just been in to see him, but the bandages don't give one much chance. Can you tell me what he's like—colour of hair, eyes?"

"Oh yes. I see what you mean. His hair's dark—tawny dark: not auburn, but dark brown with red lights in it, rather unusual. His eyes are grey, with dark rings to the iris. I think he'd be a very attractive-looking boy. He's tallish, about five feet eleven, and healthy; good muscles, as though he'd had plenty of exercise, but not a labourer, or a boy who works with his hands. And I'd have guessed that he's a country boy, his skin was cleaner and healthier than a Londoner's would be. He's got a wonderful constitution—heart and so forth. He'd never have lived else."

"That's all very helpful, thank you very much," said Macdonald. "It's my job to try to get him identified. Until we do that, we're stuck. You seem to be a very observant person, Nurse. Is there anything you can tell me, even anything you surmised, that might help? Don't be afraid of saying anything that came into your mind, however trivial it may seem."

The nurse stood and studied the tall, lean, dark fellow beside her; she liked him, his quiet voice and direct gaze, his natural manner of speech and

something intent about him, almost akin to the intentness of a doctor asking her about a patient. It was an approach which she recognised and appreciated because sensible doctors often do appeal to the sum of judgment and observation accumulated by an experienced nurse.

"Well, I shall only be guessing, but I couldn't help wondering about him," she said: "he was brought in from Paddington Station, wasn't he, where he'd been knocked over the head with an iron bar, or something? I remember thinking he'd probably been in the train, in a smoking compartment, although he doesn't smoke himself—you can always tell from a person's hands. You see, his clothes smelt of cigarette smoke, and that meant he'd been sitting somewhere smoky for a good time. Of course he might have been in a cinema or a public house—it was just that as we got his raincoat off the smell of his clothes suggested train to me."

"Thank you for telling me. We want very much to know if he'd been in a train."

"I tell you I'm only guessing, but I don't smoke myself and I do notice smells. Then I thought he was well looked after, as though he'd got a mother or somebody who took an interest in him. His underclothes were almost new, but they'd been washed at least once—at least, that's what I thought; and the washing had been done at home, because there weren't any laundry marks. I'd have guessed him to come from a country home, where they did their own washing." She smiled at Macdonald, half apologetically. "I'm only guessing, of course, but we do get into the way of noticing our patients, and summing them up by little things other people might not notice. I thought this boy might be a student of some kind, an undergraduate perhaps. That's not so fancy as it sounds; he's got a fine head and good hands."

"I noticed his hands," said Macdonald. "Well, thank you very much, Nurse. It's very good of you to have taken so much trouble over my questions."

"I'm only sorry I can't help more. It seems a dreadful thing that a boy like that should have been attacked so brutally—but Sister says he's doing nicely, and Mr. Horrocks is a wonderful surgeon."

2

Macdonald's next job was drafting a description of the injured lad, together with a description of his clothes, for publication in Press and B.B.C. Then he

went to Paddington Station.

The area where the boy had been found was still roped off. The barrows and trolleys had been moved and a painstaking search made in the grime of the pavement. It was a wretched job, because there was no real daylight and searchers had to crouch low and grovel their way along the sooty footway. Nevertheless a keen young C.I.D. man named Denton had quite a report to offer. He showed Macdonald traces on the ground where the sooty deposit had been swept and dragged by the passage of a moving body, and where sharper marks indicated that the toes of somebody's shoes had dragged over the ground.

"There was a trolley standing here, sir. I think it's plain enough that some chap managed to worm his way underneath it and those marks show where he crawled out. If it'd been an ordinary night he'd have been spotted, but last night you couldn't see a thing."

Macdonald nodded. "Yes. I think you're right. Those marks weren't made by a sack being dragged, or anything of that kind, because the toe marks show clearly—it was somebody's feet made those marks. But there's nothing to show who made them."

"Not a thing, sir. I hoped we might find a button that got dragged off, or something like that, but no luck that way. The only thing is that the chap must have got his clothes properly mucked up: there's an oily patch on the ground there—you can see where it's smudged. That's paraffin from the lamps the navvies put round the place where they were working, so the chap who wriggled under the trolley must have got paraffin soaked into his coat as well as the other muck."

"Perfectly true, and very carefully observed, Denton," replied Macdonald, "but can you tell me what he was doing there? If the chap under the trolley was the assailant, what was his object in getting under the thing when he could have bolted as easy as say-so? On a night like last night anybody could run round in circles and not get caught."

"Mightn't he have dropped flat when he heard Buller coming up, sir?"

"He might have, but it seems more likely to me he was under the trolley before Buller came up. Buller had a good torch: he saw the one chap on the ground: the probability is that he'd have seen the other unless he were concealed by something."

"Somebody snooping, sir?" queried Denton.

"Maybe," cogitated Macdonald, "but if that's so it makes the whole thing

more complicated. However, it's no use guessing at this stage."

Macdonald then went to consult with the railway authorities as to the trains which had arrived at the terminus between eight and nine o'clock last evening. It was five minutes after nine that Buller had found the injured lad, and Dr. Maxwell had said that when he examined the boy it was probably only about ten minutes since the injuries had been inflicted. While he had no evidence at all that the boy had arrived at Paddington by train, Macdonald had noted Nurse Bland's belief that it was a country boy she had helped to prepare for the operating theatre last night.

Arguing on probabilities, using common sense because there was no evidence to help, it seemed to Macdonald more likely that the boy had arrived by an incoming train rather than that he was going to catch a train to take him out of London. Surely, if he'd been staying in London and was going to catch a train at Paddington, he would have gone to Paddington by the tube on a night like last night: the busses had stopped running before nine o'clock, and nobody but an experienced Londoner could have found his way on foot through the foggy streets. If he had come to Paddington by tube, the boy would have emerged straight into the station hall, and not gone near the carriage approach where he was found. If, on the other hand, he had just arrived from the country and didn't know London well, he might not have known where the tube entrance was—and he certainly couldn't have seen the "underground" signs from the arrival barriers last night. He was told that the train from the west of England—Penzance, Plymouth, Newton Abbot, Exeter, and Taunton—had arrived at 8:50; the Cardiff train had got in at 8:25, the Malvern one at 9:03.

On account of the probability of its time of arrival Macdonald enquired further about the Penzance-Plymouth train. Had there been a ticket collector at the barrier, or had tickets been taken on the train, and where was the last stop before Paddington?

"According to normal workings, Taunton was the last stop," was the reply, "and tickets were collected on the train any time after Taunton, but last night the train stopped at Reading, where a few passengers boarded it. It was the business of the Reading inspectors to collect these tickets, but . . ."

The "but" referred to the famous fog. The Western Section of British Railways had got its trains through somehow—all credit to those concerned, but, . . . "Now you had a murderous assault almost under the nose of the police—and no blame attached to the man on the beat last night," said the railway

official, "and if some of our platform men didn't spot every passenger who got a lift on a train not scheduled to stop, no blame to them either."

Macdonald agreed wholeheartedly, took notes of some outgoing night trains, particularly the 9:50 P.M. to Penzance, via Bath, Bristol and Exeter, and then went to try his luck with platform and buffet staff and hotel porters. He asked questions because it was his job to ask questions, knowing beforeheand what the answers would be. "What, last night? . . . Have a heart, mate," to one plain "Don't be funny. Last night? Last night was . . ."

Macdonald agreed.

3

In the canteen at C.O. (which to C.I.D. men means Scotland Yard) a middle-aged expert once attached to M.I.5. was having his grouse. "Talk about a hardy perennial, I thought I'd done with it in 1941. Then I thought I'd buried it in 1945 and cremated it in 1946."

"A phoenix of a case," put in Inspector Reeves.

"Phoenix? I tell you what it's like—but you wouldn't remember, you're not old enough." (This was an aside to Reeves.) The expert turned to Macdonald, who had just come in. "Jock, what was that 1914-18 war story, about some complaint for damage done by troops put in by a farmer in Flanders? The point was that they never got it settled and the case chased some poor devil of an adjutant round every section of the front, from Wipers to Verdun."

"The Crime at Vanderlynden's, Mottram," said Macdonald promptly. "I've still got it. *'Une vierge esquintée'*—a damaged virgin, as the interpreter had it. Don't tell me you've got a similar complaint?"

"The only similarity is that they keep sending the flicking case back to me," said the special-branch man. "What sort of people do they think we are? An American citizen, travelling in Europe on business, disappeared in 1941, before the Yanks got cracking. The folk in his home town—Denver, Colorado—said they had evidence he'd left the Continent for Great Britain at the end of February '41, and he'd never been heard of again. Would we be so kind as to locate him? I ask you! What d'you remember about February and March 1941, Jock?"

"Plymouth, Bristol, Merseyside. Blitzes," murmured Macdonald. "Particularly Plymouth, but all the ports got it. Sandwiched in between the fire

blitz on the City of London and the fire blitz on Westminster later."

"That was May n," put in somebody else, and the special-branch man went on:

"Well, the enquiry first came to me in March '41: the U.S.A. Embassy asked for a particular enquiry: Charles Dorward, the bloke was called. Nobody had ever heard of him this side. If ever he got to England, it's to be presumed he copped his packet as soon as he landed—if not before: the port approaches were being bombed to hell as well as the cities themselves. We did all we could, worried the landing authority and passport blokes silly—as though they hadn't got enough to worry about already—and got the local men to check up on hotel registers, but all to no effect. So far as we could tell, the bloke had never got here. That was in 1941. In 1945 the U.S.A. swells got busy again. Could we do another checkup? It was a matter of inherited property, quite a sizeable fortune, and they wanted to determine the time of Dorward's death, in case he'd predeceased so-and-so—or hadn't predeceased him. I told the old man it was waste of time opening it up again, and he blethered about V.I.P.s and international relations and God knows what, so we did the routine stuff again and sent off a whale of a report, just to show we'd tried, though for all the use it was we might just as well have cabled 'Nix.' "

"Look here, James," said Macdonald: "as a matter of professional curiosity, is this inherited property and determining time of death a genuine reason, or an excuse for another of their famous witch-hunts?"

James chuckled—he was a saturnine-looking, weary-eyed fellow. "Search me, Jock. It's not really my business to enquire, but human nature's human nature. So far as I can make out, Dorward helped to get a few fugitives out of Germany, and he seems to have been associated with an Italian named Francesco Revari, who did his best along the same lines. But that's all off the record. I was only asked to trace Dorward as an American citizen. If you'll believe it they've started again: this trust money or whatever it is has moved into the area of litigation—quite a huroosh they've got going—and one of the witnesses who was in London in 1941 swears he got a telephone call from Dorward some time in March '41. The call was cut off when the raiders came over, but the witness swears it was Dorward speaking, so Dorward must have been alive and in England at the time—and will we look into it again?"

"Quite an idea," said Macdonald. "I don't know what their judges swallow in the way of uncorroborated evidence, I know ours would spit it out fast enough—with apologies to their Lordships for the vulgar analogy. But it looks

as though this case might keep you in clover until you're due for a pension, James. There's no end to the possibilities of enquiries."

"Trace all exchange operators on duty in March '41," said James sardonically, but Reeves cut in:

"I call it plain silly. If you couldn't trace the bloke in '41, you certainly can't trace him now. Tell them he copped a direct hit while telephoning and no traces of the incident remain." Turning to Macdonald, he went on: "Got Waterloo identified yet, Chief?"

"No. I've got his person, so to speak—habeas corpus—and the nurses say he's doing nicely, which may mean anything, but there's not been any enquiry or report, and the blokes at Paddington said: 'Don't be silly,' when I asked who they'd seen last night. Don't blame them, either. So it looks as though we may be tooling round asking retailers to identify mass-produced flannel bags and plain tie. Etcetera."

"Not grumbling by any chance, are you?" demanded James. "If so, I'll buy it. You take Charles Dorward while I get Waterloo identified. Your spot of trouble isn't a dozen years overdue."

"I wouldn't mind," said Macdonald. "I'd rather write reports—which is what yours boils down to—then roll round with a suitcase and get chatty with retailers. How many shops retail gents outfittings . . ."

"What a pity their ages don't coincide," said Reeves.

James, who followed this cryptic utterance, cocked an angular eyebrow. "Even if they did, Jock would steal my thunder," he grumbled.

"Not him. I'd pinch it myself," said Reeves.

CHAPTER THREE

"DR. GARSTANG, I'm certain this is the boy I told you about—the boy I travelled up from Devon with," said Sarah Dillon, holding out her copy of the *Daily Telegraph* to her employer.

David Garstang took the newspaper his secretary handed to him and read the paragraph she indicated. It was one of those rather colourless police statements, mentioning a casualty at Paddington Station on Monday night—the night of London's atmospheric black-out. The statement was followed by a description of the injured man and a request that anybody who could identify him or who "could give any information, should telephone Whitehall 1212, or any police station."

"I'm sure it must be that boy," said Sarah: "apart from anything else, I noticed that mark on one of his fingernails: he said he'd pinched it in a drawer."

"In that case you'd better ring Whitehall 1212," replied Garstang.

"But I don't know anything about him," said Sarah. "I don't know who he is or where he lives or where he was going."

"Well, you gave me a very good description of him, plus details of his nervous preoccupation," said Garstang, "so I think it's up to you to pass it on to the police. Besides—haven't you ever felt you'd like to ring Whitehall 1212, Sally, just to see what happens? We're so often being asked to ring that number, I've often felt I could succumb to the temptation of doing so, just as small boys operate fire-alarm signals, because they know they oughtn't."

Garstang was a psychiatrist; a consultant and practitioner who spent most of his working hours trying to unravel the complexities of human behaviour and its causes. Himself the most humane of men, he had the sensitivity and quickness of understanding which made him able to apprehend the obscurer impulses of confused and unhappy minds. Garstang was fifty, a tall grey-headed fellow with friendly eyes and a deceptively casual manner. He said that Sarah made a good secretary to one of his profession because she was an

optimistic extrovert.

Sarah replied at once to his last statement: "Well, here's your chance. You ring them. You can say that I don't know anything about the boy: that'll be that."

"Don't you believe it. If I were as good at my job as the C.I.D. is at theirs, I'd be much more use than I am. But I'll do the approach stuff—and then we'll see. Meantime you can type those notes for me, before you get involved with the arm of the law."

Five minutes later Garstang rang through to his secretary. "A chief inspector, name of Macdonald, will be round here in a few minutes. Come along in here and we can give him the once-over together."

When Sarah came back into the consulting room, Garstang said: "Of course this is your pigeon, Sally. I'm not on, so to speak, but I'd enjoy observing the technique, detective approach, and what have you, so can I stay and hold a watching brief, unless I'm turned out?"

"Yes, please do. He can't turn you out. It's your consulting room."

"Maybe, but it'll be interesting to see if he does the authoritative. I've known a lot of policemen and prison warders—and prisoners, for that matter—but I've never met one of these high-ranking C.I.D. men. You know, in a sense, their job and mine aren't dissimilar: that's why I shall enjoy studying the official technique."

When Macdonald was shown in, Garstang said: "Good morning. This is my secretary, Miss Dillon. She believes she travelled with the boy you've described, Chief Inspector. She mentioned him to me: in fact she told me quite a lot about him. So if it's all the same to you, I should be interested to hear your interrogation."

Macdonald bowed to Sarah, his eyes half smiling. "I'm very grateful to you for reporting, Miss Dillon." To Garstang he said: "Stay by all means, sir. You'll probably be able to help me quite a lot."

They sat down, Garstang behind his desk, Sarah in the chair usually occupied by the patient, Macdonald near the fire, facing her. It was Macdonald who spoke first:

"You think the description you have read fits a lad you saw in the train. Will you tell me first about the points which tally, so to speak?"

"All the points mentioned," said Sarah. "Height, approximate age, colour of hair and eyes, clothes, and the black pinch mark on his left hand—the index finger. The mark was about halfway up the nail. He said he pinched his finger

in a drawer, and that's what it looked like. He'd got nicely kept hands, with long fingers and a very wide span."

"You're a very observant person," said Macdonald.

"Well, I was with him quite a long time," said Sarah. "I got on the train at Newton Abbot, and that's about four hours from London in the usual way: last night it was much longer. We both stood in the corridor and looked out at the River Teign, and then at the sea by Teignmouth and Dawlish, and then up the estuary to Starcross." She broke off, and Macdonald put in:

"Yes. I know it quite well. It's a grand piece of line."

"Oh, good, then you know what I mean about standing in the corridor to stare—and if another person enjoys it too, well, you get talking. He was a nice boy: I liked him, and I liked the way he talked about Cornwall and Devon."

"I think it's pretty safe to assume that the lad you're talking about is the same lad we've got in hospital," said Macdonald, "but I'd like you to come to St. Monica's sometime and see if you can identify him, though it won't be too easy. As an exhibit, he's mostly bandages at present, and he may be unconscious for days, or even die without recovering consciousness, though they seem quite hopeful about his chances."

"What happened?" asked Sarah. "Did he fall under a bus or something?"

"Certainly not under a bus. We don't know what happened, but we're doing our best to find out. Now you say you got talking. How much did he tell you about himself?"

"Not very much. He said his name was Richard, and I think he must live not far from Plymouth. He got on the train at Plymouth."

"Did he tell you if he lived at Plymouth?" asked Macdonald.

"He didn't actually tell me, but I'm pretty sure he didn't. I think he changed trains at Plymouth, because he said something about travelling on that small line that runs up to Horrabridge and Yelverton—it's a narrow-gauge line beyond Yelverton and it goes on to Princetown."

She broke off, and Macdonald smiled back. "It does. I know it—professionally and otherwise. Did he mention any other places up there?"

"He spoke of Roborough Down, and places higher up on the moor—Walkhampton and Cadover Bridge and those places with the nice names—Mary Tavi and Peter Tavi, up towards Tavistock, and he really knew the moor—Dartmoor, I mean, away over to Princetown. My own home's near Kingsbridge, but I know Plymouth and the moor quite well, and I know that he must have lived somewhere not far from Plymouth because he knew the

country so well: you don't get to know it like that just on holidays."

"That's quite true," said Macdonald. "Did you gather he was coming to London for a holiday?"

"I don't know. You see at Exeter a large lady got in. I suppose she was a writer, anyway she wrote like fury all the way up to Paddington, and she looked so concentrated we didn't talk much after Exeter, except vaguely about the country. By the time we reached Taunton it was getting foggy, and the fog seemed to bother him somehow."

"Can you enlarge on that?" put in Macdonald. "Do you mean he was worried because the train was running late?"

"No. I don't think it was that," said Sarah: she hesitated a moment and then added: "I'm a bit bothered about this part. You know who Dr. Garstang is, don't you?"

Macdonald smiled across at the psychiatrist. "Yes. I've heard quite a bit about him. He's quoted to me quite frequently." Garstang spoke here. "May I put a spoke in? Miss Dillon noticed that the boy wasn't quite normal, but she's diffident of telling you so, in case you think she's aping a professional interest because she's my secretary. That's about it, isn't it, Sally? I should like to say that I think she's an accurate observer, that she doesn't exaggerate, and that what she told me about this boy was intelligent—and intelligible."

"Thank you, sir, that's very helpful," said Macdonald, and then turned back to Sarah. "Please don't be diffident about telling me anything that came into your mind, Miss Dillon. You will have learnt from Dr. Garstang that he often obtains his most important evidence from some remark let out by a patient when the latter isn't in the least aware of having said anything relevant. If you will only talk, tell us the things you noticed as they come into your head, Dr. Garstang and I will sort out the priorities, so to speak."

Sarah smiled back at him: "If you'll go on those lines, I'm only too glad to tell you anything I can. It's just that I should hate you to think I'm trying to be important, or pretending to be informed, because I'm not."

She paused, thought a moment, and then went on: "I thought at first he was claustrophobic: the fog did seem to shut us in, myself and the writing lady and Richard. He looked around and stared into the mist almost as though it hurt him: and he began sentences and didn't finish them, and when I said anything he didn't seem to hear what I'd said. I can only express the feeling he gave me by saying that he was trying to tell me something and that he couldn't get it out—a sort of mental stuttering." She looked appealingly at Macdonald. "I

expect I'm telling you all this very badly, but I've got to say that it wasn't calf love, or anything like that. He hadn't suddenly gone goopy over me. In fact I didn't matter to him except as a person who was trying to understand what he said. It was some crisis of his own."

When she paused, Macdonald put in: "You said to begin with that the mist worried him. Did you suddenly run into a fog, so that visibility became minus all at once?"

"No. It wasn't like that. It was a faint mist to begin with. Then as it thickened, it seemed to swirl, like smoke. I remember saying it was like smoke wreaths, rather evil, which gave you a feeling of something being choked. And I wished I hadn't said it, because he looked so troubled. So I shut my eyes and decided to go to sleep—because I couldn't bear to look at him." Again she paused, and Macdonald and the psychiatrist waited for her to go on. "I did go to sleep for a bit and when I woke up he said he thought we were somewhere between Newbury and Reading. And then we stopped at Reading and two men got in. I borrowed Richard's book and read for a bit, but all the time I realised that he was staring at the two men who'd just got in. He was staring at them—well, as though they were the answer to his problem, whatever his problem was. . . ." She rumpled up her short, curly hair and gave a great sigh. "I don't know if this all sounds silly, but I was so sorry for him. I was sure by this time that there was something wrong with him. I even wondered if he were an epileptic or something ghastly like that. Then I went along the corridor and spent as long as I could washing in very gritty water, and then I stood in the corridor and smoked till I knew we were nearly at Paddington."

"What a journey," said Macdonald, and she laughed a little and went on:

"It was. It was simply grim. He was sitting with his elbows on his knees and his face on his hands, staring at the floor, and I wondered if I ought to ask him if he knew his way in London—but then when the train stopped, he jumped up and said something to one of the men who'd got in at Reading and jumped out on to the platform after them without even looking at me—and I didn't know whether to be glad or sorry, because he was a nicely behaved boy: he'd been well brought up."

2

It was Macdonald's turn to laugh a little: he was rather taken with the old-

fashioned phrase coming from this most contemporary-looking young woman. He liked Sarah Dillon; her fresh skin and blue eyes and close-cropped curly hair were very young-looking, but her mind was observant and analytical, and Macdonald knew he was lucky.

"Now let's get this a bit clearer. What did he actually say to the two men?"

"He said: 'Wait a minute. Haven't we . . .' or it might have been 'Aren't you?'—or something like that."

"As though he were going to say: 'Haven't we met before,' or: 'Aren't you so and so?' " asked Macdonald.

"Yes. Just like that. I was surprised, because although he'd stared at them so queerly, I don't think they'd taken any notice of him. And I don't think any of them had been talking. When I came back into the compartment, the boy was staring at the floor, the older man was still drowsing over his paper and the spiv was sitting with his hands in his pockets, sucking his teeth, and looking quite revolting, and the writing body was putting her script together."

"Then let's have a little more about the fellow travellers," said Macdonald. "Did you grasp if the two men who got in at Reading were acquaintances?"

"I don't think so," said Sarah. "Anyway, they didn't utter, and they were quite different. The older man was about fifty, solid and prosperous looking, stockbrokerish. I should have expected him to have an educated voice—though I didn't hear it—and a good bank balance, and his clothes were good clothes. The younger man was quite young, and a nasty bit of work: cheap smart clothes and a horrible tie and a green scarf with red dogs on it and too much hair muck. He was fat and pasty-faced, like a white slug."

"And which of them was the lad speaking to when he said: 'Wait a minute'?" asked Macdonald.

"I don't know. You see, they were all standing up, the large lady holding the door, then the two men, then the boy, and I was left in the corner coping with my own suitcase."

"A thing which doesn't often happen," put in Garstang. Turning to Macdonald, he added: "May I tell you what strikes me as odd about all this? Miss Dillon said that when she first talked to the boy while they stood in the corridor he was perfectly normal: they chatted on about the countryside, and obviously he was quite coherent and easy to listen to. Then, when the fog began to thicken, after Taunton, he became different—strained and difficult and ill at ease. The suggestion of claustrophobia was quite apt, but I don't think that's the real explanation, because if he had suffered markedly from that

particular neurosis, I'm certain he'd have got out of the train at Reading, if only to stand on the platform, just for the relief it would have given him. Advanced claustrophobia is a tormenting state, and even a momentary change of environment can be a tremendous relief. But he didn't get out: he stayed put and stared at the newcomers—'as though they were the answer to his problem' was the way Sally put it, and it's a very telling phrase."

"Yes. I agree with you that that's an odd point," said Macdonald. "I know there's not much to go on, but would you make a guess as to the cause of the boy's changed behaviour?"

" 'Guess' is the word, and my opinion's not worth any more than yours at this stage," said Garstang, "but it looks as though the boy had some complex or inhibition, and a chance word or impression sent his mind off the rails. Well, there was the fog: and there was Sally's remark about it being like smoke wreaths and something choking. That might have done it: if this boy had ever been shut up in a burning building and been badly frightened and then tried to cover up his fear, he might have reacted in the way described. But that doesn't account for his behaviour over the other two men, unless he was in an advanced state of neurosis, and thus liable to associate anybody he happened to be with, with his own phantasy, as it were."

"Thanks very much, sir," said Macdonald, and then turned to Sally again. "Can you remember if the boy had any luggage with him?"

"He'd got a haversack, a khaki-coloured thing with a webbing strap which went over his shoulder," she replied. "He'd got it with him when he got out of the train. I don't know if it's of any interest to you, but the coach we were in was just behind the restaurant car, and we were in the centre of the coach."

"Yes. That's very useful," replied Macdonald. "How were you all sitting?"

"I was in a corner on the corridor side, facing the engine, the boy was opposite to me. The writing lady was in the other corner, back to the engine, and the two men who got in at Reading sat on my side. I didn't really get a good look at them till I stood up and got my grip down from the rack when I wanted my sponge bag and towel. I'm quite sure the older man wasn't taking any interest in any of us; he was half asleep. The younger one, the spiv, kept on looking at us in a furtive, calculating sort of way." She hesitated and then added: "I don't want you to think I'm dramatising this. He really was a nasty job. If I'd been alone with him I'd have been ready for anything."

"Can you describe the 'writing lady'?" asked Macdonald.

"Oh yes. She was quite a person. She was a big woman, tall and stout, in a

very well-tailored suit, navy blue with a pin stripe, and a severe white blouse with a cravat effect furnished with a black bow, so that the whole effect was masculine rather than feminine. She had dark, straight hair, cropped like a man's, very soignee and well brushed, and dark eyes with George-Robeyish eyebrows. She wore horn-rims and she had an enormous ring on her left hand, a sort of scarab effect. At Paddington she pulled on a black beret and she wore a heavy navy-blue topcoat—pilot cloth, I think it was, and a rather dashing black and white scarf. She was quite a noticeable body, and she had a very deep voice."

"Did she talk to you at all?"

"Oh no. She looked as though she'd have hated anyone to speak to her, but when the train stopped at Reading she exclaimed: 'It's Reading, thank God,' and her voice was so deep it nearly set me giggling. You see, by that time, what with the fog and everything, the journey had become a sort of nightmare—or phantasy. And the writing lady was the pantomime dame." Macdonald laughed. "If I manage to trace the writing lady, I shall be very much interested to know if she noticed anything odd about the setup," he said. "Now I wonder if you noticed if either of the two men who got in at Reading had any luggage or cases with them?"

"The older man had a leather case—quite a small one. I remember seeing him put it on the rack. The younger one hadn't anything with him."

"You have a very good memory," said Macdonald, and Garstang put in:

"She's a visualiser. She remembers things as a visual pattern."

"That explains it," said Macdonald. "In my experience visualises have accurate memories." He turned again to Sarah. "You've remembered that the boy had a haversack, the older man a small suitcase——"

"Oh, largish attache case," said Sarah.

"All right. And the writing lady?"

"A brief case and an outsize in handbags."

"And you?"

"I had a suitcase and a grip—one of those zipup efforts."

"Can you remember anything about luggage labels on anybody's cases?"

Sarah stared at him, as though puzzled: then she said: "I couldn't read any of the labels, if that's what you mean. I think Richard's haversack had a very chewed, crumpled bit of label on it, and I know the older man's case had a tie-on label, because it hung down a bit from the rack. But I can't tell you what was on the label."

"And your own luggage was properly labelled, I'm sure."

"Yes. It was. Though I don't see why you're so sure."

"Because I think you're a very practical, efficient person," rejoined Macdonald, and Garstang chuckled.

"You're right. She is. She always sees my bag has a label when I go away."

"You've been most helpful to me, Miss Dillon," said Macdonald quietly, "unexpectedly helpful, because you have just the qualities we hope for in witnesses and very seldom find. I'm grateful to you, and I shall be more grateful if you'll do one thing more. Write out a detailed description of the appearance of those two men who got in at Reading. I think it's sometimes easier to write down a description than it is to say it in words."

"Yes. Of course. I'll do it now, if Mr. Garstang doesn't mind."

"Go along and do it, my child—on your typewriter. It beats me how these efficient young things are so conditioned to their typewriters that they never use a pen," he added. "I can't think on a typewriter, and they can't think without one."

"That's grossly unfair," said Sarah indignantly. "The chief inspector has just said I'm a perfectly good witness, and I didn't type a word at him."

3

After Sarah had made a dignified exit, Garstang turned to Macdonald. "Look here, Chief Inspector, I think a few words off the record are indicated. In a sense, I feel responsible for that child—Sarah Dillon. It was my doing that she came to London. I don't think I need explain to you what's in my mind."

"No. You needn't," said Macdonald. "I'm glad to hear you say that you do feel a responsibility towards her, because I assure you that I do too. The plain fact is that she's touched the fringes of what may be a very ugly business. Speaking in confidence, the boy she travelled with was the victim of a savagely murderous attack."

Macdonald repeated to Garstang the opinion of the surgeon: that the lad had first been knocked out and then deliberately battered over the head with the iron bar. "Robbery with violence is common enough these days," went on Macdonald, "but the violence is generally used to enable the thief to win his loot. As I see it, this case is quite different. The theft was an attempt to conceal the boy's identity: everything was taken from his pockets, and then an attempt

was made to murder him. It doesn't look to me an ordinary case of robbery with violence. What was the nature of the mess the boy had got into we have no means of guessing at present, but we do know that somebody capable of a brutal murder is involved. I assure you that I shall be very careful that that person does not get to know that Miss Dillon has volunteered evidence."

"When you asked her about the labels on the suitcases, were you thinking that the name and address on her own labels could have been read by those fellows who joined the train at Reading?"

"Yes. I was, though I find it difficult to see how they connect up with the boy. You see that train doesn't generally stop at Reading. There couldn't have been any arrangement to meet the boy on the train, because the stop there was unexpected, due only to the fog. But the fact that the boy spoke to the others—or to one of them—as he jumped out of the train, has got to be considered. There wasn't much time between the arrival of the train and the assault on the boy—a matter of fifteen minutes at the outside."

"It's an odd business," said Garstang. "You know when Sarah Dillon says the boy was a nice boy, she does mean something by it: he wasn't a tough."

"Possibly not, but it's no use assuming that nice boys don't sometimes get involved in situations the reverse of nice," said Macdonald dryly.

Garstang sat and stared at his desk for a moment or two, then he said, "You asked me what I made of it: if I began to write down my own reactions I should start with three words: the mist, the moor, Princetown."

"Yes," agreed Macdonald. "Anyone who knows Princetown knows about the moor and its enveloping mists. It's often the mist which has defeated convicts who have tried to escape from Princetown. But no prisoner has escaped from Princetown recently, and no boy of this boy's age has been sent to Princetown. All the same, I'm interested in your headings. They're so much to the point that I've got my work cut out not to be overinfluenced by them."

"But it was the mist which upset the boy," murmured Garstang. "Before they ran into the mist he was perfectly happy. So that's the starting point—as I see it."

"The mist was a conditioning factor, but it's too nebulous for a detective to base his case on," replied Macdonald.

CHAPTER FOUR

"WELL—IT'S A starting point," said Detective Inspector Reeves, "and that's more than we might have hoped for, last night being what it was. . . ."

" 'Come thick night and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell . . .' " murmured Macdonald, but Reeves didn't rise to the familiar quote. He was already staring out of the window as the train crawled dejectedly westwards through inspissated, sulphurous gloom. Macdonald, watching his younger colleague, knew that Reeves was chewing over the essentials of the evidence given by Sarah Dillon and the comments made by Dr. Garstang, which Macdonald had related. Reeves had a capacity for concentrating on reported evidence to the exclusion of everything else: he examined it bit by bit, rejecting what he thought irrelevant—or "fancy," as he would have said, and eventually seizing on the bit which seemed to him essential. Dr. Garstang had picked out three key words: the mist, the moor, Princetown. Reeves had rejected these keys, or relegated them to the background. At the outset of a case Reeves was severely practical: his first reaction to the Paddington case was: "There's a killer about. He didn't pull it off this time, but he'll try again. They always do."

When he heard Macdonald's precis of Sarah's evidence, Reeves picked on one word—Reading—adding: "It'd be worth going there, just to see if any of the platform chaps can help. It's the right direction, anyway."

Macdonald had agreed. He knew that Reeves was well aware that further enquiries would be published and broadcast asking passengers who had travelled in the relevant part of the Penzance-Paddington train to report, but that there was bound to be a time lag before replies came in. Reeves, concentrating on the fact that the boy in the train had spoken to one of the men who boarded the train at Reading, considered that fact first priority, and Macdonald was of the same opinion, so to Reading they were travelling.

It was after half an hour of silence that Reeves began to talk. "All this

psychologist's stuff, Chief: isn't it just trimmings at the moment? It always seems to me they talk round in circles and avoid the centre. Here's a young chap comes to London and someone has a good bash at murdering him five minutes after he's arrived. All this guff about claustrophobia and complexes caused by fog or smoke or what-have-you doesn't do anything to suggest why somebody thought it important to put paid to him." Macdonald nodded. "True enough, but every chap has to apply his own type of shop to any problem that's presented to him."

"Seems too elaborate to me," said Reeves. "I'd rather have the homely feet-on-the-ground judgment. The girl said the boy was a nice boy. I gather you thought the girl was a nice girl."

"I did," put in Macdonald, "without any reservations."

"Noted. My guess is that the boy knew he'd got involved in something pretty murky and wasn't too happy about it, and when he got talking to the girl he realised his project would seem just revolting to her, and he dithered around trying to see a way out and wondering if he dared ask her advice about it." Reeves broke off, adding: "I know that interpretation would be dismissed as a hundred-per-cent sentimentality by the clevers. Sentiment—ugh!" He screwed up his lean, dark face and snorted, and then went on: "All the same, the young of today may talk all this sophisticated stuff, but fundamentally they're just young—just what I was when I was green and twenty—and a nice girl can still have an upsetting effect on a boy who was once nice."

"I think you're right," agreed Macdonald. "Sentimental or not, there's common sense to me in the idea that the boy was worried, possibly in a blue funk, and would have given his head to confide in Sally Dillon, because she has just the quality of serenity and stability which would seem desirable to a boy in a mess. Well, that suggests that he knew he was in for trouble, but it doesn't suggest the nature of the trouble."

'Somebody thought it worth while to loot his pockets and then kill him," said Reeves. "It wasn't done merely to obtain what was in his pockets. The boy wasn't just being employed to hand over stolen property or something of that kind."

"Agreed," said Macdonald. "To me the facts indicate that he could have given somebody away: he was a danger. So much a danger that somebody thought murder was a smaller risk than letting him live."

Reeves nodded. "I know all this is just guessing," he said, "but you've got to postulate some sort of theory to make the thing come alive: at least, I have. If I

don't think of the boy as a human being I can't make sense of any of it. I can see a boy saying: 'Look here, I'm through with all this. I'm not going on.' 'This' may be anything from stolen property to toying with the Queen's enemies ——"

"Oh, more simply, going back on his gang," said Macdonald. "When I started police work, gangsterism pertained to Chicago and blokes like Al Capone. But now the gang is well developed over here, and it's worth remembering that the chap who defaults on his gang creates not one enemy but many. Well, here's Huntley & Palmers—token of Reading town. We can but try our luck."

2

Their luck was in—thanks to Sarah Dillon. The fact that she had been able to say so precisely in what part of the train she had travelled made all the difference to railwaymen who knew exactly how the long train had fitted the long platform. The restaurant car of the train in question had pulled up just in front of the subway exit at Reading, and at this exit two platform inspectors had been on duty, in addition to a senior official who had been patrolling the platform.

"We'd a bit of trouble ourselves," said the latter—an experienced old railway man named Barron. "Fog gives us worry enough, what with trains being cancelled and delayed, and, as you fellows know, fog's reckoned as a godsend to the sneak thief."

"We know that, all right," agreed Macdonald sympathetically. The C.I.D. man knew that there were some witnesses whom it didn't pay to hustle, and Barron was one of them. He'd got a story to tell and he'd tell it best in his own leisurely way.

"We're always on the alert when there's a bad fog, quite apart from the difficulties over arrivals and departures," went on Barron. "On a night like last night, you could hardly clear a van or get mailbags or parcels on to the platform without being afraid some old tough or young hooligan was lurking unseen a couple o' yards away, watching his chance. You see, we'd had a bit of a row at the end of Number One platform—a gang of rowdies, half drunk all of 'em, started up a free fight. I reckon they were some of the bookies' hangers-on from the dog racing—we get some rough chaps in that line. But

I've known a row of that kind put up to distract attention from the real doings, if you follow me."

"I follow you," said Macdonald. "Start a row to occupy the police and platform men so that some other member of the gang can get on with his business."

"That's it—steal unattended luggage, or force the shutters of a tobacco kiosk. Well, I wasn't on Number One, but when I heard the shindy I alerted all our chaps on the upside. We'd been warned the West of England train was stopping here, and we were sending up London passengers by it, as the earlier London train had been cancelled. We checked tickets carefully at the barrier, but that's no proof some of the rowdies didn't cross the line at the far end of the platform. I've no proof they did, mark you, but seeing what happened your end, it's only fair to tell you we had some rough characters on the station when that train halted."

"Did you see anybody suspicious your side?"

"No—everything was quiet enough, but you couldn't see anybody more'n a yard or so away from you. But I do know this: the restaurant car came to a stop with its rear-door level with the barrier, and several passengers boarded the coach immediately behind it. I can't tell you anything about most of them, barring that they'd asked me time and again if there were any hope of a London train, but one gentleman I did know, and I reckon he travelled in the middle compartment of that coach you're enquiring about."

"Well, we're in luck, then," said Macdonald, "because it's a great deal more than we could have hoped for."

"And in addition to that, he's a nice gentlemanly reliable chap," added Barron. "I've known him by sight for years. Name of Weldon. He's an engineer, or at least he's concerned with an engineering business; radio parts, I believe: his works are just a bit back from the river, not far from the biscuit factory—Strand Lane, I think it is. He lives in London, but he travels up and down pretty often. The season-ticket office would give you his address."

"Thanks very much. That's a very valuable piece of assistance," said Macdonald warmly.

Barron paused a moment and then went on: "Well, it is and it isn't. I've told you he's a reliable respectable man—but that's not really what you're out for, is it? What you want is a criminal type, one of the cosh boys. Maybe the chap you've got in hospital got nosy with one of these toughs who were kicking up a shindy on Number One last night—and I don't see how Mr. Weldon can

help you there. He's the opposite of all that, a steady-going, hard-working gentleman, I'd say."

"What we want at the beginning of a case like this is evidence we can rely on," said Macdonald. "We haven't got the injured boy identified yet, but I'm not worrying much about that. If he's a country lad, as seems likely, it's possible his folks don't take a daily paper or pay much attention to the radio. It may be some days before we get him identified. But if he travelled on that train—and I'm pretty sure he did—what we want to know is what he did when he got out on the platform at Paddington. And that is what your Mr. Weldon may be able to tell us."

"Well—you never know. Maybe he did notice something," said Barron, "though on a night like last night . . . Still, it's no use harping on that. One thing I would say—if Mr. Weldon says he did see anything, then you can rely on it. He's a reasonably sensible man. You notice things like that on the railway when you get to know regular passengers. If a man's unreasonable, it'll come out, complaining of this and that and exaggerating about trains running late and all the rest."

"Yes. I see what you mean," said Macdonald. "I'm very glad to have your opinion—and thanks very much for the trouble you've taken."

3

Before he left Reading, Macdonald went and had a word with the local police, while Reeves nosed around the station, following his own line of investigation. The disturbance at the mainline station had been reported, but the elderly constable who reported it hadn't taken it very seriously. Half a dozen louts, not drunk enough to be taken in charge but "boozed enough to be quarrelsome" had got restive because there seemed to be no chance of a train, and a row had broken out in which shoving and shouting were more prevalent than genuine fighting. When the constable intervened the bunch of rowdies had scattered: a couple of them had been turned off the station, and the others had disappeared down the subways and been heard of no more. The constable thought it quite likely that the row had been a put-up job, and that some other toughs had used it as a cover to reach the up-platforms by crossing the lines instead of going through the barrier, but on a night like last night, with a station the size of Reading, it was difficult to see what passengers

had been doing.

The Reading police had not had much to report in the way of crime recently: thefts from cars and lorries—particularly the latter—had been their main concern. In this respect they believed that a gang was operating: clever young toughs, who had a selection of forged ignition keys or their equivalents, had observed the habits and movements of the regular lorry drivers: the lorries were moved while the drivers were having a meal or were otherwise occupied, and having been driven a few miles off, the vehicles were abandoned again after some part of their cargo had been removed, presumably to a waiting car (this was a familiar nuisance to the police in all large industrial towns). But there had been very few crimes of violence of late.

Macdonald asked if the police had any reason to believe that the railway was used by the operators of these rackets: the reply was that the police believed the gang were not local thieves: that while several men co-operated in spotting and reporting on movements of vehicles, it was probable that some of them did use the railway, especially as Reading Station had an unrivalled variety of routes at the disposal of men who wanted a choice of getaways.

"We shall get 'em sooner or later," said the philosophic inspector. "What we really want to do is to get the chaps who're organising the business, not merely the tough who moves the lorry. In my belief there's a number of youngsters employed to shift the stuff, and there must be a depot somewhere or other where the loot's stored. All the same, I doubt if our bit of bother connects up with your case, because there's been no violence involved our end. Your job's quite a different cup of tea." Macdonald met Reeves again at Reading Station. The latter establishment had few enthusiasts to sing its praises, but Reeves had enjoyed his tour with the railway men.

"What a place to play hide-and-seek in," grinned Reeves, "and how my youngest nipper would have enjoyed it. On a night like last night, when all traffic was running dead slow, you could have done more or less what you liked about crossing the permanent way, and getting free rides, too, for that matter."

"Glad you enjoyed it," said Macdonald. "It's back to London for both of us, hoping that Mr. Weldon is as observant as he's respectable. There's a restaurant car on the next up train, so we can get some tea to wash the fog down. It's thickening up again, ready for the rush hour."

"Where does the bloke hang out?" asked Reeves.

"Lancaster Gate Crescent."

"That's convenient of him: might have been Epping or Epsom or Weybridge or Walthamstow," said Reeves. "I don't generally quarrel with London, but weather like this makes you realise how far away one place in London can be from another place in London."

Their train toiled slowly back through the thickening murk of the Thames valley and British Railways provided hot toast and thick slabs of fruitcake to two detectives who had both picked up more ideas in Reading than that town usually provides. It was true that they had spent a deplorable amount of the working day in fogbound trains, but neither considered the time wasted. To Macdonald's amusement Reeves immersed himself in a dog-racing manual, studying form and wins and owners with his usual concentration, and occasionally studying entries in his own pocketbook.

"Working up the patter?" enquired Macdonald.

Reeves nodded. "It may be a mug's game, but I'd be an outsize in mugs if I weighed in without a spot of knowledge. You never know when you may need to put on an act."

"Have British Railways been priming you?" asked Macdonald.

"Well, I got chatting with some of them—and I thought I'd improve my mind," he responded, his lively grin suggesting that he had an idea of his own.

It was just after six o'clock that they arrived at Lancaster Gate Crescent, a curving terrace of Regency houses hidden away behind the loftier buildings adjoining the Bayswater road. Number thirteen, where Mr. Weldon lived, announced "Service Chambers," that more stylish variation on "American Flatlets" of the interwar period.

Mr. Weldon, whose chambers were on the ground floor, opened his front door himself and stood looking at them with an expression of rather weary enquiry. Macdonald thought at once how Weldon fitted Sally Dillon's description: he looked a businessman, his clothes were good but not smart, his age around fifty, his figure heavy but not obese, his face sleepy but not unintelligent.

"I'm sorry to bother you, sir. We are C.I.D. officers, investigating a case of assault. Can you spare us a few moments?"

"Come in, officers, come in," replied Weldon at once. He had a deep voice, pleasant in quality, and his intonation expressed the least degree of irritation, as well as sleepiness.

He led them through a tiny lobby to a big comfortable sitting room, warm

and quiet, where central heating and a good open fire had done something to dispel the prevailing fog.

"Filthy day," he growled. "I tell you straight I was asleep in my chair when you rang the bell—fed up, like several million other Londoners. Sit down, both of you. What's the trouble?"

"You've probably read in your daily paper of a casualty at Paddington Station last evening," began Macdonald.

Weldon waved a hand towards an unopened copy of *The Times*. "I haven't even opened my paper today: it wasn't delivered when I went out—you can't blame anybody for anything in weather like this. I've spent most of today driving out to an inaccessible factory near Luton, and when I came in I had a drink and went to sleep. So you'll have to tell me anything I ought to know. It's true I was at Paddington yesterday evening, if that's any help to you, though how you fellows knew I was there I don't quite see."

"Our enquiries took us to Reading, sir, where one of the platform inspectors gave us your name," replied Macdonald. "The facts are as follows: a young man, severely injured about the head, was found in Paddington Station last night. Evidence leads us to believe that he travelled on the West of England train which arrived at Paddington about nine o'clock. This train stopped at Reading——"

"Quite correct. I travelled from Reading on it myself," said Weldon.

"Can you tell us what part of the train you travelled in?"

"I can. In the coach immediately behind the restaurant car, about the middle of the coach."

"Have you any recollection of the other passengers in your compartment?"

Weldon sighed. "My God, what a question! I can't tell you quite why—probably the infernal fog—but that journey last night seems to have invested itself with a sort of nightmare quality. I was dog-tired, for one thing, and the fog had an unreasonable element in it. Too much of a bad joke altogether. I'd had a long day at the works—I'm an engineer by trade and I'm a director of a small works in Reading. I'd hung around God knows how long in that qualified fog waiting for a train, and I was more asleep than awake. But I expect I can rake up a few facts if you'll let me worry away at it at my own pace and not expect me to trot it out pat. Incidentally—you know my name. I don't know yours."

"My name's Macdonald—Chief Inspector. My colleague's named Reeves."

"Thanks. I like to know who I'm talking to. Cigarette? Might as well be as

comfortable as we can. Now about the people in that compartment. There were three when I got in—I do know that because I went for the remaining corner seat, facing the engine. Opposite me was a stoutish, middle-aged woman: oddlooking party, mannish rather than feminine in effect. On the same side as her there was a boy, and there was a girl in the comer opposite to him. As I got in, another chap followed me. I remember him the most clearly. He was a bad 'un. Can't tell you how I knew it, but know it I did." He paused a moment. "You say you've been at Reading, so I take it you know there was a bit of a rumpus on the station—free fight, or something."

"Yes. We heard about it."

"Well, I'm up and down that line pretty frequently and I know there are a few toughs who come up and down. Racing touts, some concerned with the Newbury course, some with the dogs at Reading. I've no interest in gambling of any kind. I believe it's true that the dog-racing business is honestly run, by and large, like horse racing, but there's always some hangers-on, twisters, and so forth." Here he yawned, a wide face-splitting yawn, and apologised hastily. "Sorry—but it's the damned weather. Look here, I'm wandering on. Stop me if I'm off the point."

"Not at all. I want you to go on. You're being very helpful," said Macdonald.

"Well, you know your own business best. When this doubtful customer took a seat beside me, the first thing I thought was that my wallet was in an inside pocket, my top coat was buttoned up, and my attache case had nothing of value in. I'm not the only mug who's had his pocket picked in the train." He rubbed his greying hair and went on slowly: "I can't even tell you if I'd seen the bloke before or whether it was his type I recognised. And he'd got some pals on the train. I saw one of 'em peering in from the corridor—signalling, perhaps. I don't know. Perhaps it was the fog, and being dog-tired, and the row at Reading and I was imagining things. Anyway, take it or leave it—the chap beside me was a bad hat if my judgment's worth anything."

"Did he speak to, or take any notice of anybody else in the compartment?"

Weldon sat and pondered. "I'm not certain. The girl got up and went along the corridor. She was gone quite a time. I was sitting with my eyes shut—my head ached. I sat up once because I thought someone spoke to me. It was the young chap in the far comer, saying something to the chiser—not to me, but the lout beside me didn't answer."

"Can you remember what the young chap said?"

"No. I can't. Asked for a light probably. I didn't really hear." He broke off,

his square face worried. "Look here, I've told you I was whacked to the world. I'd taken a dislike to the blighter beside me, I was fed up and irritable, and if I told you I'd heard what was said I should be making it up. To the best of my recollection I heard the word 'camp,' as though the one chap was claiming acquaintance with a service pal—but I don't really remember and I didn't really hear. If it hadn't been that I distrusted my next-door neighbour I shouldn't have noticed it, but the younger chap looked honest—though a bit lacking."

"When you got to Paddington, did you notice what happened to either of the young men?"

"They passed me on the platform. The stout dame got out first: then myself. The chiser followed me. I turned round because I didn't trust him immediately behind me, and I saw his pal closing up, the older chap who'd been in the corridor and stared in at us. So far as I can remember this pair and the young chap hurried off in a bunch. I wasn't doing any hurrying. I lost sight of them before I'd gone a few yards." He threw his cigarette end in the fire and reached out for another smoke. "Look here, Chief Inspector, I've been trying to answer your questions truthfully, and you may think I've spun you a yarn that's a bit over-coloured. You've got to remember this damned fog's got on everybody's nerves, including mine. It's made the day's work harder and longer, and when you get the hell of a journey at the end of it you get unreasonable. I've told you one of these chaps was a bad hat and one looked less than a hundred per cent and they went off up the platform at the double. Well, just divide all that by half and maybe you'll be nearer a fair estimate."

"Well, sir, checking your evidence by evidence previously received, it sounds to me as though you're being pretty accurate. I agree with you that the fog had been so poisonous all day that everybody was affected by it more or less, and I understand what you mean when you say that the journey had a nightmare quality—"

"Very sympathetic of you, Chief Inspector. I'd hardly have blamed you if you thought I was a bit weak in the upper story myself, blethering about nightmares and bad hats. And now, for the love of Mike, tell me what all this is leading up to. I realise it's your business to ask questions and mine to answer them, but even a patient chap like me wants to know the reason he's being interrogated. Who was it got laid out—and where?"

CHAPTER FIVE

MACDONALD replied to Weldon's question by repeating the description of the unidentified boy given to press and radio, adding that the casualty had been found in the station approach. Weldon said at once:

"Well, one thing's certain. The chap you're describing wasn't the chiser who got in with me at Reading. It might have been the boy in the other comer. I didn't notice him much, but I have a vague recollection his hair was reddish. The chief thing I noticed about him was that he stared: he looked what folks in the north call gormless—a mug, if you prefer it."

"Did he stare at you?"

"Only by the way, so to speak. He stared at the fellow next to me."

"Now, sir: will you do your best to describe the latter? You said you were convinced he was a bad lot, so I take it you must have had a look at him."

"I had several looks. How's one to describe an impression? Here's the best I can do so far as facts are concerned: he was about my own height—five eight—narrow in build, giving a queer impression that he wasn't solid, or perhaps eel-like describes what I'm trying to say. Black hair, smarmed back, and a face like a potato, pretty shapeless, with dark eyes set too close together and a slobbery sort of mouth. Clean shaven, beastly clothes with overpadded shoulders and a waist. His clothes were dark and he'd got a flash tie and a gaudy scarf." He broke off and suddenly asked a question, as though talking to himself. "Why did I put him down for a bad 'un? I think it was because he came up too close to me on Reading platform. One minute he wasn't there and the next he was, close behind me—too close. It was the same when he got in the train. He sat very near to me, his hands in his pockets—but I expected them to be in mine any minute."

Reeves put in his first question here: "How old was this chap, sir?"

"Oh, quite young. They were only lads, both of them—about twenty, at a guess."

"And you think you heard the word 'camp' when the boy in the corner

spoke to the chiser?"

Weldon rubbed his head thoughtfully. "I thought I did—but I might well have been wrong. I told you I was half asleep . . . camp, ramp, scamp. Oh Lord, it might have been anything. Might have been my own train of thought—why aren't these young blackguards doing their national service? All I can tell you for certain is that the boy in the corner spoke to the fellow next to me, and that when I opened my eyes, the latter just sat mum as though he hadn't heard."

"You spoke of an older man, sir, who looked in at you from the corridor," put in Macdonald.

"Yes: a fellow of my own age," replied Weldon. "Heavyish, in filthy clothes. Unpleasant-looking bloke, I thought. I thought he was looking for a seat, but he wasn't. He was attracting the attention of the young chiser next to me—not beckoning exactly, more like making a code sign with his fingers."

"Ticktack man," suggested Reeves. "They have their own way of passing information."

Weldon stifled a yawn. "You know more about that than I do. I've told you all I can—and it adds up to damn-all. But I did see the three of them hurry off together, or more or less together. I lost sight of them before I got to the barrier. I made for the tube—it was the only way of getting home, bar walking. And even the tube was running dead slow. I went to Oxford Circus and changed on to the Central London and came back to Queensway—of all crazy roundabout ways of getting here. I know my way from this house to Paddington Station as well as any man can know it, but the sort of fog we had last night not only blinds you, it defeats your common sense."

Macdonald nodded. "I think a lot of people felt that way," he said.

Weldon shrugged his heavy shoulders. "It gives you an idea of the state of mind I was in last night when I admit I funked walking home: so if I seem to have been an addleheaded sort of witness, I'm sorry. Normally speaking, I'm a reasonably observant person. Last night I wasn't."

"Well, sir, I reckon you haven't done badly," said Reeves. "Very kind of you, but you wanted something precise, I take it, and I've nothing precise to tell you," said Weldon.

When Macdonald and Reeves left Weldon's chambers, they found, as they expected, that the fog had thickened enough to reduce motor traffic to walking pace. It was not as dense as it had been the previous night, but still thick enough to make the streets dangerous, deceptive, and exceedingly unpleasant.

"Considering all things, we've not done so badly," said Macdonald. "I shall go back to C.O. and see if any reports have come in. You might as well go home: it's not the sort of night for alfresco observation. The tube has it, I think."

"How do we get there?" asked Reeves.

"First on the left and hope for the best," replied Macdonald. "Any comments on our last witness?"

"Well, he did his best for us and his evidence corroborates Miss Dillon's," said Reeves, "but it's a damned funny story. I was interested in the fact he spoke of that boy as 'lacking.' "

"Yes. 'Gormless.' It's a north-country word—witless. It looks as though we can't leave the psychiatrist out of it, because the boy wasn't witless at all in the early part of the journey."

"Looks as though he got in a flap over something," said Reeves, "and then tried to chum up with the spark in the spiv tie. There's one thing suggestive there, especially in connection with the word 'camp' overheard by Weldon."

"Are you thinking the boy recognised a fellow he'd been in the Forces with?" said Macdonald. "A deserter, for example."

"That's the sort of idea: if the boy insisted on recognising a tough who'd every reason to dislike being recognised it provides a motive of sorts."

"Well, I'll get on to the Reading fellows and see if they can make anything of the description provided," said Macdonald. "Now we've got some corroboration, it'll be worth while urging them to find out all they can about the rowdies they'd got on the station last night."

"Let me have a go at it tomorrow, Chief. I made some rather good contacts while I was goating around Reading station: a coupla permanent-way men, a greaser, and a carriage cleaner. All of 'em know more about the bookies' touts than any of the higher grades do. If you want to find out about the low-downs, the lower down you go the nearer you get to the doings."

"Perfectly sound—and you have a knack of your own in dealing with what you call the low-down," said Macdonald.

"I went to a primary school when I was five," said Reeves. "A church school,

it was, in north London. I got a schol. to the grammar later on, but what I learnt between the ages of five and eleven I've never forgotten, and I sometimes think it's been more use to me than the school-cert stuff. And I don't mean the church catechism or the pep talks the vicar doled out on Fridays."

"So I gathered," said Macdonald, taking Reeves firmly by the elbow and guiding him to the left.

"There's just one thing I can do which you can't, Chief," said Reeves. "I can pass as a pukka sneak thief in the dirtiest bar in Notting Dale and get the patter right as near as makes no difference."

"Admitted—and the department's profited by the fact time and again," said Macdonald, "but I've got to butt in here with a take-it-steady caveat, as far as this case is concerned. Until we've got 'Waterloo' identified, it's no use assuming that the Reading rowdies are the answer. It may be some private hate which we can't guess at until we know the boy's background."

"Good Lord, don't think I'm backing a dark horse in a fog, Chief. I've learnt a bit playing second fiddle to a Jock, no offence meant, but there's that bit of work young Denton spotted—the customer under the trolley. Funny how things fit: what was it Weldon said—'eel-like?' "

"Yes. I noticed that," said Macdonald. "The Dillon girl said 'sluglike.' Both are rather suggestive."

"A human eel, a luggage trolley, and a patch of paraffin oil," mused Reeves. "Suggests to me we may be heading for the rarest of all chances in our job—a firsthand witness of the event. Doesn't often happen. Hullo, is that the tube? I never thought I should have to admit you know London better than I do."

"The tube it is," said Macdonald. "I don't think I do know London better than you do: I know it in patches. So do you—but you could beat me hollow in the neighbourhood between Hackney and Walthamstow."

"Good old Hackney," chuckled Reeves. "I wasn't half a limb when I went to St. Phil's Primary; but my dad belted me in the good old way and I learnt it didn't pay."

"You'd better have a chat with Dr. Garstang about it," said Macdonald.

"Reckon I could teach him a lot," said Reeves reminiscently.

Macdonald went back to Scotland Yard and waded patiently through a number of reports sent in by a diversity of persons on the subject of redheaded boys who might have travelled on the West of England to Paddington train. Long experience had taught Macdonald to sort out reports of this kind pretty accurately. He knew that there was nothing here which was worth investigating and he tidied away some routine jobs, delegating them to his colleagues.

The chief inspector had decided that he'd got to get "Waterloo" identified before he could put his case on a firm basis, and the best chance of doing so was to rely on Sally Dillon's judgment. "He lived somewhere near Plymouth. . . . He changed trains at Plymouth. . . . He knew the railway which goes up to Princetown, through Horrabridge and Yelverton. . . ." In short, Macdonald had made up his mind to go to Plymouth, to follow the branch line, and tackle every stationmaster and porter en route between Plymouth and Princetown. He knew it would be an advantage to have a car: remembering the time he had spent in the train between London and Reading, he wondered if a car would really be much slower than the railway: he rang up the Meteorological Office and was offered a crumb of comfort about conditions to the west of London: once clear of the "London basin," he was informed, visibility was improving to the southwest. The Midlands and the north were still dense, but the west country was clearing.

"Well, here's hoping," said Macdonald. "I'll turn in early and get on the road by six provided the Met. blokes haven't changed their minds."

Reeves got home to his small house in West Hampstead much earlier than his wife had dared to hope. "How did you manage it? Scotland Yard shut down by the fog too?" she asked.

"The Chief sent me home. There wasn't much we could do at the moment," said Reeves. "But I'm going out later—not for long. In by closing time. I say, that smells good, whatever it is."

"Call yourself a detective," she retorted. "That's oxtail, that is: and why you can't sit down and have a bit of a rest after a good supper I don't see. You and your pub crawling."

"I've learnt more that's been useful to me in pubs than I ever did sitting at home and reading a book," said Reeves. "I told you what it'd be like when you married me——"

"Oh, don't be silly. I'm not complaining. You're all right—if only I saw a bit more of you. But when you start on a new case it's always the same. Now go

and wash your face, do, you're as black as a sweep, and I'll have supper on the table in five minutes."

"Nothing like a good meal for helping the old ideas to develop," chuckled Reeves.

4

On the same foggy evening a young man sat in a pub in the Notting Dale district studying the sports page of his evening paper. The Whistling Pig was not a house of good reputation: the local police had nothing definite against it, and no charge of breaking licencing regulations had ever been brought against the publican, Albert Hodgeson, but the police believed the bar to be the resort of shady characters. The customers at the Whistling Pig, nearly all of them men, were not toughs or rowdies, not men who gained their living by brawn, such as navvies or heavy-goods porters. One constable had given it as his opinion that you'd never find any man in the bar of the Whistling Pig who was employed in any job represented by a trades union; they weren't employed in the sense of earning a weekly wage. They picked up a living on their own account, trading goods in short supply, gambling in the wider sense of the word, using their wits to buy cheap and sell dear, always on the lookout for tips, inside information, the chance of betting on "a cert." On the whole they were a quiet lot: messages were frequently left for "old so and so": enquiries made as to whether Tom or Dick or Harry had been in lately, and the customers certainly got around: Doncaster, Leicester, Newmarket: Lewes, Brighton, Gatwick: Lincoln, Liverpool, Lanark: all these familiar place names were bandied about by men who had either just come from or were going to them, and who were ready to "do business" in various lines, not always connected with the sport of kings. And they had money in their pockets: beer was not in great demand. "Scotch—a double and the same again, Bert"—a pound note didn't last very long when these gentry got going.

The young man who sat studying form and odds and analyses had been to the Whistling Pig several times before. He really knew his subject, and he had occasionally discussed the runners in some of the less famous races with the hangers-on who came to the pub hoping to pick up something from the more knowledgeable as they warmed up towards closing time. The young man's name was Henry Brown—1'Enery, to those who asked for his opinion on a

hopeful outsider. He was thin and shabby and grubby and furtive-looking, and he sank into his environment so well that he wasn't noticed—which was the best tribute to his ability that could have been formulated. For Henry Brown was a policeman, in training for the borough C.I.D. If his superior officers had known that Henry was doing a spot of private training "after the hooter went" it was very improbable that he would have been commended for his zeal. But Henry was an incorrigible seeker for information: he was fascinated by these hoarse-voiced men who spoke a language still often incomprehensible to him. Very slowly but surely Henry Brown was getting an insight into the minds of men who made their livings by anticipating what other mugs would do with their money.

Henry was chary of speech while he was at the Whistling Pig. When he spoke it was in a hoarse growl which suggested he had spent his day bawling from a coster's barrow: he found the hoarseness easy to assume and his accent was faithful Cockney. He had a good ear for vowel sounds and his "Naow" was a negative compounded of a rich variety of variations on a basic "ow." He was beginning to get the hang of rhyming slang, too, but his most dearly prized achievement was the fact that he could hang about in a pub like the Whistling Pig without arousing any comment among the habitues.

It was just as Henry was folding his paper to a suitable size to slip into his pocket that he heard a slight altercation going on at the bar. He didn't turn his head—he was much too cagey for that: he crammed his paper into his pocket and began to make a pattern with matches on the table top beside him.

"Oh, you didn't, did you?" enquired the voice of an elderly Cockney—and the expression he got into his words was quite remarkable. "So you never went to see Solly Bing's new tike? That's a funny thing, that is."

Henry knew about Solly Bing. This worthy was a breeder of greyhounds and he had got some big prices for his dogs, but the fact that interested Henry Brown was that Solly Bing's kennels were near Reading. A conscientious student of police reports, Henry knew that Chief Inspector Macdonald was interested in the arrival of a train from the west of England which had picked up passengers in Reading last night. His reasoning as neat as the interlocking of a zip fastener, Henry immediately wanted to know more about the man who had denied going to Solly Bing's, while his interlocutor obviously didn't believe the denial.

"Went to the flicks with yer girl friend instead?" went on the unbelieving one, "And that's a very funny thing, that is, me 'aving 'ad a nice chat with Solly

this morning, over the phone, mind you. You see I went to you-know-where to pick up a parcel as 'ad been brought up for me by an obliging friend."

"I don't care where the flicking blank you went to," retorted the other. "I stayed at 'ome last night, like any bloke in 'is senses would, the weather being what it was. Got that?"

"Now you do surprise me," put in the first voice, but Bert Hodgeson put his spoke in before the argument could be continued.

"Now then, Barney, that's enough of that. Can't a young chap do as 'e blooming well likes on a foggy evening without 'aving to cross 'is t's and dot 'is *is* to Uncle? Now if you wants to 'ear of a likely dawg, what about the Major's Little Nipper?"

The conversation became general again, and Henry Brown backed his hunch and walked out with a growled "goo' night all." Henry was certain that the altercation would not be continued in the bar: Albert Hodgeson was not only a very competent publican, he was a character whose veto was respected. None of the habitues of the Whistling Pig would get across Hodgeson: it wasn't worth their while. If customers felt quarrelsome they took their quarrels outside, and Henry believed that the two men who had contradicted one another with so much venom in their voices would come and finish their argument outside, for preference in the blind alley at the side of the pub, where lorries pulled in for the night by arrangement with Hodgeson.

Henry Brown was perfectly right. Having concealed himself behind a lorry, assisted by the co-operative fog, he had only to wait five minutes before low voices told him that the two disputants were going at it hammer and tongs. It was a silly, inconclusive sort of argument, reminiscent of two schoolboys saying you-did-I-didn't, but rather to Henry's surprise the row didn't develop towards violence. The younger man—the one with the hissing voice—became more conciliatory and began to explain how the mistake arose—a matter of confusing him with a pal. Then the two men made off together in a generally northerly direction, towards Westbourne Park, so far as Henry could gather, for they cut diagonally across a network of streets, all poor narrow streets with dreary features reduced to sameness by the common denominator of the fog, and Henry followed them pertinaciously. It was at the comer of mews that he lost them: voices and footsteps suddenly ceased. If Henry had been a little bit older and more experienced, or if he had been in the company of one of the wise old constables who knew the district, he might have been aware of danger in time. As it was, he went down into a pit of blackness lit by madly

whirling stars without having time to realise what a mug he had been.

5

Two casualties were reported to the Paddington police before midnight. One was a stout, elderly man who had been severely damaged by a lorry; the lorry driver had followed his usual routine of backing into a yard where he left his vehicle at night. He swore that he had looked down the yard and seen that his way was clear before he backed in, and then he felt a bump—not a shout or cry of any kind, just a bump. Being an honest man, the driver contacted the police with remarkable promptitude. "Must 'a been drunk—or ill: lying there in the road, couldn't 'a happened else," said the driver unhappily.

The police patiently took all particulars: ascertained from the contents of his pockets that the injured man's name was Barney O'Flynn and that he lived in a back street off the Portobello Road, and sent him off to the nearest hospital, where the already overworked night staff received him without enthusiasm. The constable who was sent to the back street off Portobello Road reported that the house was let out in rooms, rent in advance, and no questions asked: nobody knew anything about Mr. B. O'Flynn except that he "paid his rent reg'lar and kept his self to his self. Next of kin? Search me."

The second casualty was found by a constable in Becton Yard, lying up against the railings. (Becton Yard was not far from Westbourne Park Station.) This casualty might have given the police more trouble, for he had nothing in his pockets by which he might have been identified, but the constable recognised the thin face as they lifted the limp body on to the stretcher.

"Jiminy, that's young Henry Brown, that is. What the heck . . ."

When the matter was reported to Henry Brown's superior officers, an irate inspector exclaimed, "I always told him he was looking for trouble: too clever by half, Henry is. Always knows best. What's the hospital report?"

"Concussion, sir. Coshed at the base of his skull. Doing nicely, they say, but he may be unconscious for days."

"Confound him!" said the inspector.

Mr. Barney O'Flynn died without recovering consciousness just as the night staff were going off duty.

CHAPTER SIX

MACDONALD was awakened very early in the darkness of a December morning by the promised phone call from the ever-wakeful meteorologists: he was told to cheer up—the fog was lifting. Officially and unofficially the grimy pall was yielding to a westerly air stream. You could see the stars over Salisbury Plain and a waning moon had been hailed from the Wolf Rock Lighthouse, he was told by his friendly informant, who ended by chanting: "Rise and shine! Six o'clock on a perishing winter morning."

Macdonald did his best to make his thanks sound enthusiastic, switched on the electric fire and kettle, and tried to feel grateful. While the kettle was boiling he rang C.O. to find out if any reports had come in during the night and was told about young Henry Brown. While the chief inspector was considering this further headache for his Paddington colleagues, he was told that Reeves was also on the line, and in a moment or two the latter was switched through to Macdonald.

"What woke you up at six ack emma?" demanded Macdonald.

"The fog's cleared, so I reckoned you'd be off to an early start," said Reeves. "I just thought I'd find out if there'd been any doings in the night so we could have a word before you beat it. About young Henry Brown, Jock. Leave him to me. It may not be anything to do with our little game, but I promise I won't miss anything."

"I'm quite sure you won't, but do you know anything about him?"

"Henry? Yes. I know his dad. Henry's a good chap, but he's got too much confidence in himself. He's made a mucker of it this time, but it may turn out to be useful. Anyway, you leave me to the back streets while you go and find out about Waterloo. He's the linchpin in this contraption."

"I have a feeling he is," agreed Macdonald. "Well, I'll make you a present of Henry and I'll be off in half an hour. It's about seven hours' hard driving, or may be less with luck. Anyway, I shall make Plymouth in time to get some useful work in this afternoon, provided the westerly air stream keeps doing its

stuff." Macdonald enjoyed that drive. London was still murkily sluggish as to atmosphere, but in comparison with the previous few days it seemed miraculous that so much solid filth could be shifted by a vague and fitful breeze from the west. Every mile westward brought improved conditions, and by the time a pale wintry sun gleamed over the summit of the Wiltshire Downs Macdonald was logging a steady fifty m.p.h. and thanking heaven for the cold clear air and the incredible cleanliness of a winter countryside. Andover, Amesbury, Mere—a hundred miles knocked off in three and a half hours, including getting out of London: midday saw him in Exeter, thankful for a stretch, a drink, a bite, and off again on the last lap by Bovey Tracey, Ashburton, and Ivybridge, with a feeling of regret at not taking the road over the moor by Moreton Hampstead, Two Bridges, and Yelverton. Macdonald knew that road, with the long series of hills, climbing all the way from Moreton Hampstead across the moor near Princetown—not a road for a man who was driving against time. He crossed the River Plym and ran into the famous battle-scarred town just as the clocks were striking two. It had been a good drive: very few drivers would have done it in the time and Macdonald had every reason to feel satisfied.

2

The next six hours were spent by Macdonald in the patient, detailed enquiry which is the mainstay of detection. First at Plymouth Station, then up the branch line towards Yelverton Macdonald went: with a description of "Waterloo," followed by enquiries about passengers on the train which had reached Plymouth at midday the day before yesterday. The chief inspector talked to stationmasters, porters, and guards at Marsh Mills, Plym Bridge, Bickleigh—and drew a blank at all of them. It was at Clearbrook, after leaving the Plym Valley, that he got his first hopeful response. Clearbrook Halt was in the Meavy Valley, but away to the west rose the heights of Roborough Down, and Roborough was one of the place names Sally Dillon had mentioned. It was a farmer, collecting gear from the station, who joined in the conversation, saying:

"Sounds to me like young Dick Greville. He's got darkish red hair. His folks used to farm hereabouts, way up on Roborough. They moved over to Sheepstor a few years ago. You ask at Yelverton—they'll know him there.

Been doing his army service, the boy has, and maybe he's been home on leave or such like."

Macdonald drove on to Yelverton as the short winter afternoon faded into darkness. In front of him rose the heights and tors of Dartmoor Forest, and to his right was the great stretch of wild moorland rising to sixteen hundred feet at Petres Cross.

At Yelverton he phrased his question rather differently, and the answers he got made him pretty certain that he had traced "Waterloo" home. The boy lived on one of the moorland farms near Sheepstor.

"Are you going up there tonight, sir?" a railway man asked him. "It's not too easy to find, and a rough road at that. Mrs. Greville, she's been poorly, I hear. 'Tis her heart. She'll be upset to hear of Dick getting hurt. Thinks the world of him, she do."

Macdonald thought a moment: he had been on the go since six o'clock that morning, driving hard most of the time. If he hadn't found out what he needed to know, he would have gone on, but he felt averse from turning up at a remote farmstead on a dark winter evening to question the boy's mother, especially if she were suffering from heart trouble.

"I think the morning will do," he said. "I don't want to upset his mother more than I can help, and things never seem so bad in the morning."

"That's true enough," the other replied, "and I doubt if you'd ever find the place in the dark, it's that hidden away, and there's no real road, just farm tracks and confusing at that. It's easy enough to get lost on the moor if you don't know it, and some of them tracks lead to nowhere."

Thanking the man for his help, Macdonald turned back to his car, yawning as he went. The keen moorland air was making him so sleepy that he was glad he had decided against hunting for Moorcock Farm in the dark: he had got to the stage when he could easily fall asleep over the wheel. He went and found quarters for the night—Yelverton was well served by hotels—and then put through a trunk call to headquarters to find out what Reeves had been up to.

3

When Reeves first heard that Henry Brown had been knocked out by a method which was becoming all too familiar—the cosh—he gave some detailed consideration to Henry's own character. Henry was the son of a prosperous

small shopkeeper in northwest London, and Reeves had known the boy for some years; in fact it was probably on account of admiration for Reeves that Henry had joined the Police Force. He was a clever boy and a hardworking one, and he had soon got his wish and been transferred to the borough C.I.D. Reeves knew that Henry was conscientious and that he had the sort of practical loyalty which would prevent his setting out deliberately to score credit for himself by following up information which should have been reported to his superior officers.

"He was off duty when he copped it," meditated Reeves. "He was wearing filthy old slops and he was dirty and mucky. That means he was gloating around on some game of his own, getting experience and information in his own way. Can't blame him, we all do it, all the keen ones, anyway. But I don't think he'd have gone butting into a case C.O. was handling—he'd got too much sense of discipline: so it looks as though he tumbled into trouble on one of his own private games."

Reeves had just finished shaving when an idea came into his astute head. "Henry used to be one of those kids who liked writing his facts down, keeping diaries and all that. I wonder if there's anything at his digs. I don't think he'd've been mug enough to take his private notebook in his pocket when he was doing overtime on his own account at the back of Westbourne Park."

By seven o'clock that morning (when Macdonald had already got clear of Chiswick,) Reeves was busy cooking breakfast, a job he did for his wife when opportunity permitted, and by eight o'clock he was out of the house, praising heaven in his own way (in company with some nine million other residents of Greater London) that the fog had cleared. He went first to Scotland Yard ("to tie up the red tape"), and then hastened off to consult with the Paddington authorities and to get their detailed report.

The dead-end (or cul-de-sac) where Henry Brown had been discovered was railway property. It had once been a stable yard, but one side of it was now let as a warehouse. The other side was occupied by a firm who dealt in firewood —kindling and logs, with peat and "nutty slack" as side lines. The wall at the end divided the yard from the permanent way near Westbourne Park Station. The thing that really mattered about all this was that no one lived in the yard, no one had any reason to enter it after business hours, and the proprietor of the firewood business saw to it that one of his own vans obstructed the fairway so that it could not be used for free parking by the owners of other vehicles: it was, as Reeves put it, "as good a place to leave a chap you'd just

coshed as you could hope to find."

After a glance at the yard, and a quick reckoning up concerning the dreary locality and its approaches, Reeves went off to Henry Brown's lodgings in Carlton Vale.

Henry's father had sold his business in Kilburn a few years ago and had moved out to Mill Hill, and Henry's mother had seen to it that her son found a comfortable and respectable lodging in the borough which he served. Henry had been uncommonly fortunate, for he had a big airy bed-sitter overlooking the level sward of Paddington Recreation Ground.

Looking around Henry's room (after a few reassuring words to the decent body who "did" for him), Reeves couldn't help grinning a little. This room showed the unofficial Henry, a "choosey" young man who had a liking for pictures and who possessed quite a selection of books; a few of the latter dealt with "crime and punishment," but most of them were very remote from sneak thieves, cosh boys, con men, and those other gentry against whom the police waged war. Reeves found matter for satisfaction in the bookshelves. Henry, obviously, was still a studious fellow, and in Reeves's experience studious young men liked "putting things down on paper."

There was a writing table under the window, and Reeves dealt with its locked drawers with an ease which was almost pathetic, and for the next half hour he examined Henry Brown's diary, notebooks, and occasional essays.

When Reeves first opened the diary he swore vigorously, for the entries were in code and looked a bit formidable, but Reeves knew that Henry was still young and, though intelligent, not educated up to the higher flights. It took Reeves a very short time to find out that the codes were of the simplest variety: one consisted of inverting the letters of the alphabet—A became Z, B became Y, C became X, etc. The numerical code consisted of numbering the letters of the alphabet, taking an arbitrary number for A and then carrying on consecutively.

It took Reeves about half an hour to spell out the names of streets, shops, and pubs in which Henry Brown had taken an (unofficial) interest. "DSRHGORMT KRT" looked a discouraging collection of symbols at first sight, but by writing two alphabets, one above the other, the lower one in reverse, Reeves soon interpreted Whistling Pig—and then he sat back and whistled himself.

Reeves had spent two hours yesterday evening in a West Hampstead local, cadging information from a well-informed crony on the subject of probable

haunts of race-course hangers-on in the vicinity of Paddington. His informant was an expert in this peculiar byway of knowledge (and had indeed lost the equivalent of his shirt on account of it at one stage in his career), and the Whistling Pig had been mentioned as one of the resorts of the cleverer tipsters. If Henry Brown had spent some recent evenings at the Whistling Pig, it looked to Reeves as though Henry might have acquired more information than was good for him.

Sitting there, staring out over the sooty grass in "Paddington Rec," Reeves racked his brains over the best way of dealing with this development. He knew it would be useless for himself to go and "do an act" at the Whistling Pig. If Henry had been there and got marked down as dangerous, any stranger would be suspect. And Reeves knew what he would be up against, officially or unofficially: the blank denial, corroborated by every habitue: a solid wall of ignorance, of noticing nothing, recognising nobody, remembering nothing. "I wonder if shock tactics might be best: rush him, so to speak, before he's got his intelligence squad going," thought Reeves.

Packing young Brown's notebooks into his own case, Reeves hurried along to the Bakerloo Tube and was soon consulting with his Paddington colleagues. After a few cogent words of explanation, Reeves said:

"The job's this—rattling Albert Hodgeson up so that he thinks it'd be wiser to co-operate a bit than to go on saying: 'I don't-know-I-never-noticed,' ad infinitum."

Seeing the rather scandalised expression on the face of the sergeant in charge, Reeves went on: "Now don't you get worrying, chum. I know the rules as well as you do, and if Albert Hodgeson puts in a complaint about Gestapo methods, I'll resign from the Force and apply for a job as a coal miner. What I want from you is this: details of any incident you haven't tidied up in the last twenty-four hours—traffic accidents'd do, stolen car, bag snatching—don't tell me you've got a clean sheet on every beat."

The sergeant chuckled: "We've got the very thing you want, mate. Traffic accident—or what looked like an accident. A lorry driver backed into his usual yard and ran plumb over some chap he didn't see. The casualty's name was Barney O'Flynn."

"Was?" demanded Reeves.

"Yes. Was. The hospital just rang through. Mr. B. O'Flynn died without regaining consciousness. If you ask me, late lamented was just the sort of customer to patronise the Whistling Pig. He lived in a street off the Portobello

Road, in a house that prides itself on not asking questions. I've sent a man along to seal his room and see there's no interference. Like to pop along there?"

Reeves considered for a moment. "No. I'll go to that pub first, before the landlord's had time to find out what's what. I don't approve of too much guessing in our job, but if these doings don't tie up somehow I'll eat my hat."

"Well—it's up to you," said the sergeant non-committally.

4

Albert Hodgeson was in the bar, putting things to rights before opening time, when Reeves knocked on the door. Old Charlie Tucker had got the door on the chain, for he had just finished cleaning the floor. Hodgeson went to the door and snapped out: "Now, then, what's your game? You know the opening time, don't you?"

"I should," said Reeves, flicking open his wallet. "C.I.D. inspector. Any objection to my coming inside?"

"No—and no need to 'ave," replied Hodgeson dourly. He loosed the chain, let Reeves in to the neat, well-cleaned bar, fastened the doors behind them, and waited.

"Just a matter of corroborating evidence," said Reeves. "An alibi, if you like to put it that way. I want to know what time Mr. Barney O'Flynn was here last night: when he arrived and when he left."

It was a simple-sounding gambit, but Reeves knew just the problem he had presented to the publican, assuming that the latter *did* know Barney O'Flynn. Reeves, sceptical of psychologists' methods and jargon, used one of their most reliable methods himself—the time reaction. If Hodgeson did not know O'Flynn, his answer would come out pat, in a split-second "Never heard of him." But if Hodgeson did know O'Flynn, he was bound to play for time; never let a customer down would be an inviolable rule in a joint like this one, and Reeves, cunning in all the lawbreakers' manners of thought, had chosen his gambit with extreme care. He knew at once that his long shot had come off, knew it with the certainty of experience.

"Mr. O'Flynn," repeated the publican slowly. "Is 'e a big 'eavy chap—grey 'air and grey moustache?"

"You should know," snapped Reeves, "or don't you? If not, say so."

"Now you look 'ere, and don't be so smart," parried Hodgeson. " 'Ow many customers do you think I 'ave in 'ere of an evening?"

"I don't know and I don't care," retorted Reeves. "I've asked you a plain question. If you don't know the answer, say so. Perhaps you weren't here yourself last night."

"No perhaps about it. I was 'ere all the time we was open, but I don't keep my eyes on the door checking the times customers comes in and out."

"That's all right," said Reeves easily. "You've answered my question, haven't you. You can't call O'Flynn to mind because you don't know him by sight."

He was driving the other into a corner, and he waited for the next move.

"I didn't say so," retorted Hodgeson. "Likely I know him as well as I know a few 'undred others, but me memory for names isn't what it was. If you'd remind me what 'e looks like, I might be able to oblige. I never forget a face, I'll .say that."

"That's fine," said Reeves, smelling his way along like a hound on a doubtful trail. "What was the row about?" he shot out. It was always worth trying, that one, and it often worked. He was watching Hodgeson's eyes: they were light-coloured eyes, easier to judge than dark ones, because you could see the pupils dilate or contract. When a man was rattled, the pupils of his eyes often contracted: Reeves knew that, though he didn't call it a nervous reflex.

"What yer talkin' about?" demanded Hodgeson.

"A row," said Reeves promptly. "Barney O'Flynn and that little argument he had. Now you needn't go telling me you don't have any fighting in your bar. I know that already. But there was an argument."

"Dozens of 'em," said Hodgeson. "What do you reckon this is? An 'ome for deaf mutes? If you've ever been in a bar before, you ought to know a bar's a place where chaps get their opinions off their chests."

"I didn't come here for opinions," said Reeves crisply. "I've given you the chance to give a straight answer to straight questions, and you haven't taken the chance."

"I'm not going to give no answers unless I know who I'm talking about, and that's straight enough," said Hodgeson. "Maybe I do know this O'Flynn, maybe I don't."

"That's O.K. by me," said Reeves, pulling out his notebook: "You don't mind signing a statement, do you? Say if we put it like this: 'I don't remember the name Barney O'Flynn. If he's a customer here I can't call him to mind. I can't say if he was here last night or not.' That's fair enough, isn't it?"

But Albert Hodgeson wasn't going to let his customer down; that word "alibi" often worked wonders. Reeves had succeeded in implanting in the publican's mind a belief that O'Flynn had given Hodgeson as a reference for an alibi, and Hodgeson wasn't going to sign any statement which would leave O'Flynn in the lurch.

It was at this moment that old Charlie Tucker chimed in. He had been on his knees all this time, assiduously polishing the brass plating that reinforced the bottom of the door.

"If you'll pardon me butting in, boss, Mr. O'Flynn's that big gent wot beat Jamie Potts at darts. Irishman, Mr. O'Flynn is. No mistakin' that. 'E was in last night around nine and 'e stopped till closin' time. It was Mr. O'Flynn was talkin' to you about dirt-track racing."

Hodgeson responded immediately. "Why couldn't you say so before, Charlie? You 'eard this detective officer asking questions, didn't you?"

" 'E wasn't asking 'em of me, boss. But I tell you what: you ask Mr. Baines when 'e comes in this evening. 'E'll remember, Mr. Baines will."

Reeves heaved a good deep histrionic sigh. "The time you chaps waste," he said. "D'you think I'd have wasted my time coming here if I didn't know that O'Flynn had been here? I ask for corroboration of a plain statement—we always look for independent witnesses, you know—and you argue around in circles like a mothers' meeting." He turned to old Charlie. "Now you seem to have your wits about you. What about a quiet young chap who sat in the corner, there? Been in several times before: knows a bit about the dogs. Thin, weedy-looking chap, not much colour, unhealthy-looking cuss."

"Arr . . . can't tell you who 'e is: they call 'im 'Enery," said Charlie. "Quiet, as you say. But 'e went out earlier. I do know that. I'd been meaning to ask 'is opinion about Black Velvet. That's a likely dawg, I'm told."

Reeves's quick brain recognised at once that Charlie thought it quite safe to be forthcoming about 'Enery. 'Enery wasn't really a regular, not one of those patrons whose interests must be accorded priority.

"Never noticed 'im meself, but being be'ind the bar all the evening I don't see as much as Charlie does," said Hodgeson amiably. "Tell you what, Inspector. If you'll look in about closing time this evening, after I've had a word with Mr. Baines and some of the regulars, I ought to be able to tell you just when that Mr. O'Flynn was 'ere last night. No unpleasantness, I 'ope?"

"Depends . . ." said Reeves judicially. "Well, thanks for your help. I'll look in later."

Reeves left the Whistling Pig with his brain racing at top speed. He hadn't learnt a great deal, but what he had learnt seemed likely to fit in the jigsaw puzzle he was devising.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHEN MACDONALD left Yelverton to drive up to the moor (everybody spoke of Dartmoor thus—the moor) it was a clear, cold, grey morning. There was no sunshine and the uniformly grey sky was pale, as though the clouds or overcast were very high up. It was a colourless morning: even the meadows and pastures of the valley looked wan, very different from the vibrant emerald of springtime, and as he mounted towards the moor the world became more and more a study in monochrome. The withered bents of the upland grassland were ashen, the occasional thorns etched black against the sky, the stone outcrops dark, the withered heather sepia. And yet, to a Londoner's eye, it was all incredibly clean: low-toned, admittedly, but utterly different from the drab murk left by London's famous fog.

As he drove, Macdonald's mind dwelt on the anomaly of a boy who had been bred in this wild, silent moorland being attacked and nearly done to death in the grime and clamour and rush around a London terminus. The further he drove into the uplands, the more anomalous the whole case seemed to become: here was he, Macdonald, pursuing one line among the tors and crags of Dartmoor, remote from any sign or token of human habitation, while Reeves pursued another line in the same case among closely packed humanity in the squalor of back streets, in yards that ran cheek by jowl with the permanent way, in a pub of ill-repute which backed on to slums of very evil repute. Macdonald did not believe in chance, so far as this case was concerned: there was a connecting link, somewhere, between the moor and the back streets of Paddington.

The road leading out of Yelverton had been a good main road, but after a few miles Macdonald had turned off on to a secondary road, mounting steadily towards the moor, then on to a track which could hardly be called a road at all. Before setting out, he had obtained a large-scale Ordnance Survey map and consulted with the Yelverton police about the best route to take, for

it was plain enough from the map that there was a diversity of tracks over the moor, some better, some worse, which approached Moorcock Farm. He pulled up at one point and studied his map again, wondering if he were heading for trouble: the track he was following was steep and narrow, and seemed to be deteriorating rather than improving. There was no room to reverse and no room to pass another vehicle and the thought of having to back down the steep bends was exceedingly unattractive. He decided to go on as long as his car would co-operate: there were no road signs and the rise facing him was certainly as steep as anything he had seen in Great Britain. Very slowly and protestingly the car took the improbable gradient and Macdonald was able to see "over the bump" to a level and a dip. In the dip were the stone buildings and lichened roofs of an ancient upland farmstead: there were wind-bent thorn trees almost crouching over the stone walls and some stunted pine trees, swaying and soughing in the wind.

The rough track led through a couple of pastures, walled and gated, into the cobbled fold yard, and Macdonald realised he must have taken a wrong turn which had brought him to the back entrance of the farm. As he got out again to close the last of the gates, he saw a woman's figure standing in the doorway of the farm. She was staring at him—as well she might. Visitors must be rare in this place, but visitors who came by car up the track Macdonald had negotiated must be rarer still.

He walked across the fold yard and called good morning, adding: "This is Moorcock Farm, isn't it? I think I must have taken the wrong turn."

The woman was young—about thirty, Macdonald guessed, dark-haired and dark-eyed, with a high colour and beetling black brows: she was vivid and sturdy, but more disposed to scowl than smile.

"Yes, 'tis Moorcock. There's many try that road in summer, but few gets up it. My dad was always getting the horses out to tow some motorist over the top, for turn you can't. What is it you'd be wanting?"

"I came to see Mrs. Greville. I'm told she's not been well, but I should like to see her if she feels able to talk."

"She's not fit to see no one," said the other. "If you'd tell me what it's about ——" She broke off as someone came up to the door just behind her, a much older woman, this, grey-haired and pallid, with a shawl over her bent shoulders.

"What is it, Margie? Did the gentleman ask for me?"

"Oh, Mother, go back, do, and sit by the fire. I'll see to it, whatever 'tis.

You'll catch your death coming out in this wind."

"If he asked for me, why, let him come in and say what's brought him. I've still got my wits left, and 'tis no sort of manners to keep a visitor standing out in the yard. You step inside, sir, into the warm."

She turned back into the house, her voice serene and resolute, in contrast with the higher pitch of her daughter's scolding voice. Margie glowered at Macdonald.

"She's not fit to be up and about, but she's that obstinate I dare not cross her: 'tis her heart. Now don't you go bothering her. If 'tis business, I can settle it."

"I'll be very careful," said Macdonald quietly.

He went into the low-beamed kitchen, where the smell of wood smoke and peat mingled with a fragrance of herbs and apples and heather honey. It was a dark room, for the windows were tiny: there was a great open chimney, where logs smouldered on a huge hearthstone and a kettle hung above them on a crane.

The grey-haired woman stood by the kitchen table, one hand resting on it, and Macdonald said:

"I'm sorry to bother you when you're poorly, Mrs. Greville."

"Nay, I'm not that far gone I can't face what I've got to face," she said, and her voice was still serene. "There's a fire in my little parlour, if you'll kindly step in. Margie's been spoiling me, bidding me sit by the parlour fire with my feet up, but bless you, I can't abide sitting doing nothing. You follow me, sir, and mind the beams, the doors are low."

She led the way across a dark, narrow passage into a cheerful little room with a chintzy paper on the walls and a bright fire glowing in a modern grate. There were pictures on the walls and many photographs on the mantelpiece. One was a photo of a boy in battle dress, and Macdonald knew at once who it was. He had only seen part of "Waterloo's" bandaged face, but he recognised it. Mrs. Greville went and sat in her armchair by the fire and looked up at the tall stranger, her face almost ashen. She saw that his eyes were on the boy's photograph, and she said at once:

" 'Tis about my boy you've come, about Dick."

"Yes, it is," responded Macdonald. "He's in hospital, in London. He had an accident in the fog. You'll have heard about the thick fog all over London?"

She shook her head. "No. We don't get a paper up here, and the wireless went wrong, but 'twas thick over the moor for days. Is he badly hurt, sir—

dangerous bad?"

"He was pretty badly hurt, but the surgeon and nurses were very pleased with the way he's getting on," replied Macdonald. "His head was injured and he was unconscious when I saw him, so he couldn't give any account of himself."

"And you came all this way to tell me?" she asked wonderingly, and the gratitude in her voice gave Macdonald a pang. Then suddenly she added, "But, sit you down, sir. I'm forgetting my manners, leaving you standing like that. You see, I'd worried about him. He's not like other boys, is Dick, and I knew he was troubled. . . ."

Macdonald sat down opposite to her and she spoke again, in a voice hardly above a whisper. "He's not dead? You're not——"

"No. He's alive, all right," said Macdonald. "I telephoned to the hospital before I came out this morning. He's still unconscious, but they said he was doing well."

She gave a great sigh, but before he could speak again she said: "You haven't got to worry about me, sir. I've been poorly with my heart, but I'm better now, and I can face anything now you've told me he's getting on as he should." She paused, and then said slowly: "You'll know about him—about Dick?"

"No . . . I don't know anything about him," replied Macdonald. "I want you to tell me about him if you can, because he couldn't tell me himself, and the hospital wants to know about him."

She accepted this without question and gazed across at Macdonald, and then right beyond him, looking out of the little casement window to the grey moor.

"We adopted him, me and my husband," she said slowly. "When nobody claimed him and they couldn't find anything about him, they let us adopt him. It was all legal and right, and he's our boy, with our name. You mind what happened in Plymouth, sir, in the war, the spring of 1941, 'twas—the bombing."

"I remember," said Macdonald. "I was posted there from London with the Civil Defence: that was after the second night."

She nodded and still looked out of the little window. "We was farming up on Roborough Down then—you'll mind Roborough? 'Twas safe enough there, up in the hills, but we could see the sky over Plymouth and hear it all. Dear life, 'twas a thing you could never forget . . . the fires and the bombing, the whole place ablaze, the petrol stores burning, exploding . . . no one could tell

what 'twas like who didn't see and hear it. It made my heart ache, the horror of it. And 'twas the day after, Jack—that was my husband—he was out to see to the lambing ewes up near Rob Tor. He had a shelter there, like the shepherds always have, and a rough bed with sacks and some bundles of hay for when he was out at night. And 'twas there he found Dick, curled up asleep on the sacks, his clothes all scorched and burnt off him. Dear life, he must have run out of that hell that Plymouth was, run like a frightened beast. . . . Can you think of it, a small boy running like a mad thing till he dropped, and fell asleep among the ewes up there on Roborough?"

Macdonald sat very still and quiet. She didn't want an answer—and there was nothing to say. She met his eyes and seemed satisfied that he had understood, and went on more slowly: "Jack, he picked him up and set him across his shoulder as he would have a sick lamb, and he brought him to me. 'He musta run out of that blazing hell,' he said, 'run and run, poor little chap, all scorched and black.' Well, I put him to bed and cared for him. You can guess what it was, with all the doctors driven to death down there—and he wasn't hurt, except for his hands and face being scorched, and his poor legs all tom and bleeding. He just slept and slept. I fed him as you'd feed a baby and he slept again, and when Doctor came—old Dr. Carson, that was—he said: 'You look after him, just as you're doing now. You can do more for him than anyone. It's shock, poor little lad.' And when he woke up, he couldn't speak. He was just dumb." She stopped again, not waiting for an answer, but immersed in memory, as though she were standing again by the bedside of a small boy who couldn't—or wouldn't—speak.

"It came back, gradual like, his speech," she went on at last. "At first it was just yes and no. He soon got his strength back, and he ran round after my husband and helped with the lambs, but it was weeks before he really talked. And he couldn't remember anything: he couldn't even tell us his name. It was as though a curtain had come down and shut everything out."

"And nobody ever claimed him, or reported he was missing?" asked Macdonald.

"Nobody," she replied. "It wasn't for lack of asking. They came again and again, and had folks up to see him, but nobody knew him. Of course some of the people from the government offices wanted to put him in a home, but Dr. Carson stood out against that. 'You've got enough of these poor souls on your hands,' he said, 'every institution crammed with homeless folk. This boy's got a home here, and someone to care for him. Let him be, do.' So they let me

keep him, poor lamb that he was. And I loved him from the first, loved him like my own, from the time I took his scorched rags off him and washed him and fed him like a baby, him fast asleep, poor mite."

"And he never told you what had happened?" asked Macdonald.

"Never. He didn't know. As weeks went by he talked more and more: he could read. That came back bit by bit, and counting and adding up—though I never was sure if he picked it up again from me. He was a clever little boy, Dick was. He was always clever."

"How old did you think he was?"

"Eight or nine. We decided he was nine, and we gave him a birthday—Lady Day—and we called him Richard, after the baby boy I lost. And he went to school that September, like the other children, and was entered as Dick Greville, and he never looked back. He was good at books, and Teacher thought the world of him. But he's never remembered what happened, though we told him just how he'd come to us. 'Twas only fair to tell him." Again she was silent for a moment, gazing out of the window to the distant tors.

"The good Lord knows how many was killed in Plymouth that night," she said. "They counted and reckoned as best they could, and entered all the missing, but in a seaport like Plymouth, how could they tell how many was killed, or who they all were? You know the way folks poured out of London, away from the bombing, thinking to be safe in the west country. My man and me, we thought our Dick and his folks must have come from away, spending a night in Plymouth, mayhap, before they went on down into Cornwall, trains being that late—you know how 'twas. And his folk got killed and he escaped, and ran out of the town, up Crown Hill as likely as not, with the bombs and guns going all round him and everything afire. Could you wonder it near drove the child crazy?"

2

It was an extraordinary story, pondered Macdonald—but the night of the Plymouth blitz had been an extraordinary night. People had survived in the streets; some, indeed, had fled, mad with terror, from blazing houses. They had run, as terrified animals run, from that inferno of fire, and Macdonald was quite willing to believe that a sturdy small boy, bereft of his senses by the horror of it all, might have run until he dropped, right up in the hills under

the blessed benison of a sky which boded no ill. But it was unusual to hear of a case in which loss of memory had been permanent—if it had been permanent.

This was the lad of whom Sally Dillon had spoken. "I said the fog was like smoke wreaths, evil and choking, and I wished I hadn't said it, because he looked so distressed."

Mrs. Greville sat back in her chair, immersed in memory: apparently she was not tired by talking; it even seemed to have been a relief to her to repeat that story, which must have had so much effect on her life, for it was obvious the boy was the joy of her old age.

As they sat silent for a moment, the door opened and Margie came in with a small tray, her cheeks flushed, her eyes smouldering, and Macdonald could see that she resented this stranger to whom her mother had been talking so eagerly.

"I've brought your hot drink, Mother, and 'tis time you rested."

"Don't you fret about me, dearie. I'm stronger than you think," rejoined Mrs. Greville. "This gentleman's came all the way from London to tell me our Dick's had an accident, Margie. He was knocked down in the fog and he's in hospital." She turned back to Macdonald. "I don't even know your name, sir. I'd like to know it—and I'm grateful to you for thinking to come so far."

"My name's Robert Macdonald, Mrs. Greville. I'm a police officer. It's our job to get in touch with the parents of lads who meet with accidents in London, you know."

He spoke very simply, realising that this woman who lived so far away from crowds and streets and policemen would accept his words unquestioningly, but even as he spoke he glanced up at Margie and caught the look in her dark eyes. Was it surprise, curiosity—or hope?

In a second there flashed across Macdonald's mind a realisation of the position implied in the story he had just heard: a widowed mother, an adopted son whom she loved devotedly, and a daughter who seemed to brood and tended to scold.

"Dick—is he bad, then?" asked Margie, and Macdonald could have sworn it was hopefulness that gleamed in her eyes.

"He was very badly hurt," rejoined Macdonald, "but the hospital people are satisfied with the way he's getting on."

"How did it happen?" she asked. "Was it one of these motor accidents?"

"We don't know," replied Macdonald. "If it was a traffic accident, no witness has come forward to give evidence about it, and the boy hasn't been

able to tell us anything. It was partly on that account that I wanted to talk to Mrs. Greville: I thought perhaps she would tell me what he was doing in London, where he was going, and so forth."

"Of course I'll tell you all I can," said the old lady, but Margie put in:

"Mother, you've talked enough. You'll be awearing of yourself out. If there's questions must be answered, let me do the talking."

"No," said Mrs. Greville quietly. "Not about Dick. You know naught about him, Margie. You go and get on with the cooking like the good child you be. If Dick's in trouble, it's me has to think for him."

"If you can't trust your own daughter it's a fine thing," she flashed back. "Here I've come and left my own home to look after you, and all I get is: 'You go and do the cooking.' Oh, I'm sorry to speak so sharp, but I get that mad——"

She turned on her heel and flung out of the door, and Mrs. Greville sighed.

"You can see how 'tis," she said sadly. "Mayhap it wasn't fair to Margie. I tried to do right, but Dick seemed to need me so much more when he was small. He wasn't like other boys."

"I think I understand, Mrs. Greville," said Macdonald. "Now I don't want you to get overtired and I know this must have been a shock to you——"

"Nay. I was thankful to talk to you," she said. "You see, I'd been worrying. I felt there was something wrong. . . ."

"Can you tell me what it was that worried you?" asked Macdonald.

"Indeed, I'll try . . . but it'd be easier if I told you my own way, like I did about finding Dick out on Roborough Down. As you get old you talk to yourself—or it seems like that. It's all plain when I think it to myself, but if so be I'm asked questions—when and why and who—then I get muddled and forget."

"I'd much rather you told me in your own way, Mrs. Greville. You gave me a wonderfully clear description of finding your Dick, and looking after him when he slept and slept, and I do understand just what you mean when you say he's not like other boys and that he needed you even more than the strong, healthy daughter needed you. So tell me things as they come into your mind. There's no hurry. I'm here to help you, not to worry you." Suddenly she smiled at him. "You say you're a policeman, so I suppose it's true; but there's something kind about you. I knew that when you first told me about Dick being hurt . . . so maybe we'll see it through together."

"We'll try," replied Macdonald.

"I told you Dick went to the village school," she said. "He was a good learner—books came easy to him. He got his scholarship and went on to the grammar school. But I knew he had his bad times, too. Sometimes he'd go off by himself, wandering . . . and maybe his mind wandered too. I used to think he tried to get it all back—all he'd forgotten—and then he'd come back and sleep for hours, as though he was tired to death, and when he woke up, 'twas all right again."

"Did he ever tell you anything about his wanderings?" asked Macdonald.

"No—I don't think he'd anything he could tell. It was as though he were in a maze like, being lost in the mists we get up here on the moor. But after a while, he grew out of it. He was the happiest boy, and everything came easy to him, books and prizes and games. They thought a lot of him at school: the headmaster wanted him to be a doctor or a scientist. But no, Dick's always said he'd farm. He loved the farm. So then the headmaster said: 'Well if he's set on farming let him learn the right way of it'—meaning the science of it. I don't understand all this modem learning, but they said he could go to college and study agriculture. Maybe you know the sort of thing they mean. It's all strange to me. Why, my folks has farmed for generations, and good farmers, too, with none of this book learning. But there, 'tis modern ideas, and all I wanted was for Dick to have the best he could have." She paused again, in the way which Macdonald had noticed before, and then went on: " 'Twas all settled. He was to go to some college which'd teach him all about breeding and modern ways of tending the stock and resowing grasslands and the like. I want to tell you this so you know everything seemed right and happy for him and no bothers. They'd even got the college fixed—Reading he was to go to. They said it was the best place for him."

"Yes. That's quite true. There's a good department of agriculture at Reading University," said Macdonald.

His voice was quite even: it didn't reflect the way his mind had jumped . . . Reading . . . Was it going to work out this way?

"But then there was his National Service," went on Mrs. Greville. "Dick wanted to do that. He wouldn't shirk it, even though he could have got out of it, they said, with him meaning to farm. I'm not sure about that, but he joined up, same as all the lads do, and he went to camp. And how I missed him!" she sighed. "My husband, he died three years ago, and I kept this place on with

two good men. . . . I wanted to keep it till Dick was settled, but, dear life, it was sad without him. He went abroad after a time, to Egypt, and then to Germany. And at last he came back. He was different. I can't tell you just what it was, but there was a cloud over him. He didn't talk to me like he used. He'd sit quiet, brooding, and then he'd start a sentence and not finish it. I was sure what his trouble was—things was coming back to him. Things he'd forgotten. But it was the same as it was when he had his bad days when he was a young boy, he couldn't make sense of it, couldn't fit it together."

She was twisting her hands together unhappily, the gnarled fingers working distressfully. "I couldn't bear to see him like that. I tried to get him to tell me what ailed him. When he first came here, they sent him to these psychologist doctors as they call them—but it wasn't any good. He just went dumb with strangers. But I remember one of the doctors said to me: 'Wait till he's older, when he's got stronger and the shock's worn off, and then send him to me again.' " She looked across at Macdonald and said slowly: "I didn't send him. Maybe I didn't want to send him. He was well and happy . . . and he'd grown to be ours. I didn't want him upset."

Macdonald nodded: he understood what she meant. She went on: "But when he came back from soldiering and he was so different, I asked him if he'd like to see one of these doctors, and he said he'd talked it over with Brian, when they were in Germany together—Brian knows all about Dick—and he was going to see some doctor whose name he'd got from a friend. And it was that same evening he told me, I went and got ill with my heart, and I couldn't talk to him again for a while. They wouldn't let me talk." She gave a long sigh, and Macdonald looked with concern at her pallid face.

"Nay, don't you be like the rest and tell me to stay quiet," she said. "I've nearly done. Dick, he stayed at home here until he saw I was safely on the way to being myself again, and then he said he was going to see the people at this college he's going to, but first he was going up to London to see this psychologist doctor, and that's how it was." She hesitated, and then asked sadly: "Could it ha' been he got worried and muddled and unhappy with it all, and just got knocked down not looking where he was going?"

"It might have been," said Macdonald gently. He couldn't tell this ashen-faced woman what had really happened to her boy. That would have to wait.

He got up, saying: "You've been very brave to tell me all about the boy. I'm glad you've told me, because the doctors who are looking after him ought to be told. Now there's only one other thing I want you to tell me: this lad Brian,

who is Dick's friend—what is his other name, and where is he living now?"

"Brian Salcombe—why, he lives down to Long Barrow Farm: Horrabridge that's near. Not far away. Brian and Dick's going to set up farming together one day."

"Good luck to them," said Macdonald. "Now I'll write down the name of the hospital where Dick is now, and I'll see that somebody writes to you and gives you news of him. And I'll come and see you again if I may before I go back to London."

"You'll be very welcome," she said. "Somehow it's helped telling you everything. I've been that worried. . . ."

"I'm glad it's helped: talking does help when you're worried," said Macdonald, "but you've talked quite enough for now. You see I'm just like the others, telling you to stay quiet."

She smiled, a gleam of mischief shining in her eyes. "And if Margie gives you a piece of her mind when you go out through the kitchen, don't you be put out. It's hard for Margie. . . ."

"I won't be put out—even though Margie puts me out," responded Macdonald. "There's just one other thing: do you mind if I go up to Dick's room and look through his things? I think the hospital would be glad if I took an extra pair of pyjamas, and a few things like that. I know just about what he wants, so you needn't bother to help me."

She smiled back at him. "That's right kind of you to think of it, sir. You go straight up. The stairs are just outside this door, and his room's at the top. All his things are washed and tidy, I do know that. You just take what you think."

Macdonald went up to the little room close under the overhanging eaves: it took him a very short time to look through the boy's belongings. He found nothing to help his case, though he took a book from beside the bed to satisfy the policeman's inevitable demand for fingerprints "to check by." Then, with two suits of new pyjamas neatly rolled up under his arm, he made his way downstairs again.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHEN MACDONALD went into the kitchen again, Margie was rolling out pastry on the kitchen table, and judging by the smouldering resentment in her eyes, Macdonald wouldn't have been greatly surprised if she had set about him with the rolling pin.

"You did ought to be properly ashamed," she burst out: "if she dies, 'twill be your fault, letting her tire herself out talking and worrying when all the doctors say she must have quiet."

"In spite of what the doctors say, I don't think talking has done her any harm," said Macdonald. "She was worrying about the boy, and it was a relief to her mind to talk about him. But I'll see that her doctor comes out to see her, if you'll tell me his name——"

"And how pleased d'you think Doctor'll be, having to come out here again?" she flashed back. "It's mad for her to live out here. Half the time in winter you can't get here at all, what with snowdrifts and mist. When Father died, I did beg her to sell the place and come and live with us, and my husband said the same. But no: 'twas Dick's home, and Dick must have his home to come back to till he was through with all this college nonsense."

She slapped the rolling pin on to the dough in a manner that boded ill for the pastry. "And when she's ill, 'tis me has to come and see to things in this back o' beyond—no tap water, no electric, no drains—all along of Dick. It do make me that mad!"

"I'm sure it must be very difficult," said Macdonald. "I'm afraid I don't know your name, Mrs. . . . ?"

"Mrs. Burrow," she replied. "Our farm's down in Branscombe, and it's a proper dairy farm with a good house, and I don't like coming and pigging it up here on the moor, but no other woman'd take the job on in a house like this. And now what's all this about Dick?"

"I can't tell you anything more than your mother did," responded Macdonald. "He arrived in London in a very thick fog, and he was found by a

police constable, nearby the station. His head was injured and he is still unconscious and we don't know how he came by his injuries. It's my job to find out," he concluded.

She flashed a glance at him. "And how will it help you coming up here?" she asked.

"We obviously want to know if he travelled by himself, if friends were to have met him, where he was going, and what his plans were," replied Macdonald. "I didn't ask your mother because I didn't want to worry her. Can you answer any of those questions?"

"No. I can't," she retorted. "Dick doesn't tell me his plans and I don't ask. If he'd had any sense, he'd've persuaded Mother to come to me when Father died, but no. Let her bide here, he said. And I told him what I thought of him and since then he's scarce said a word to me. So it's no use asking me what he was doing or who he was doing it with, because I don't know." She threw the rolling pin down, adding bitterly: "He's had everything: schooling and clothes and pocket money and petting, and I suppose he'll have the farm into the bargain. That mad, it makes me. He's a proper cuckoo in the nest, is Dick."

Suddenly she sat down, and Macdonald saw that she was trembling. "I'm sorry," she said. "It's no way to talk, to a stranger and all. I always was one to lose my temper. I'm sure you meant kindly, coming all this way, but things have got me down. And if you were in my place here you'd know what I mean. It's Dick this and Dick that till I'm tired of it, and not a soul to see from morning till night. You talk about fog in London. You try the fog up here. All yesterday 'twas like a pall, and nobody could ha' got here, no matter what."

"It must be worrying for you to be so cut off," said Macdonald. "I take it the farm men sleep in the house?"

"Yes, they sleep here—and eat here. I cook for them," she said bitterly. "Old Thomas and young Jim: both as dumb as sheep. No newspaper, no wireless—the old battery set's run down again. Oh, you don't want to hear about my troubles, I know that, and I've nought to tell you about Dick because I know nought."

"Well, perhaps you can tell me which road I take to get back to Yelverton," said Macdonald dryly, and she laughed.

"Not the one you came by. I suppose the old signpost's down again—it's always coming down. You go on past the house and through the gate and you'll get out at the front. It's not much of a road, but 'tis better than the way you came up."

"Can I leave any message, or do any errand for you?" he asked, and she shook her head.

"No. I'll manage. Now 'tis clear again, the van from the stores will come up. 'Tis the one excitement in the week, that van is."

2

Macdonald drove back by a less precipitous route. He looked out to discover how he had taken the wrong track coming up and saw the old signpost lying in a ditch, well concealed. He got out to look at it and found the wood at the base pretty well rotted. It might have fallen down of its own accord—or it could easily have been pulled down. He was wondering quite a lot. He knew that very few cars would have taken the gradient he had driven up, and the fact suggested a variety of ideas.

It was one o'clock when he found the entrance to Brian Salcombe's farm, Long Barrow, and he met the young farmer just scrambling down from his tractor. Brian was a big, fair fellow, Saxon in type, blue-eyed and ruddy, and he stared at Macdonald and his good car in some surprise.

"Is it about the rates?" he enquired.

Macdonald laughed. "No. It's about Richard Greville. I've just been up to Moorcock and seen Mrs. Greville. The boy's had an accident in London."

"Oh Lord . . . is he bad?"

"Bad enough. Can I come inside?"

"Yes. Of course. Do you know him—Dick Greville?"

"No. I'm a C.I.D. man. We're a bit puzzled about his accident."

In a few moments Macdonald was in another farmhouse kitchen, warm, dark, smelling pleasantly of baking.

"Come and sit by the fire. Would you like some dinner?" asked Brian. "An old Biddy comes and cooks for me and there's generally plenty. Now what's this about Dick?"

It didn't take Macdonald long to get Brian into the picture. He and Dick Greville had been at the grammar school together: they had done their National Service together, both in the same section of the Royal Armoured Corps, and they had been demobbed together. Brian, with the help of his father, had bought the small farm he was now working, and later the two lads hoped to get more land and work it together, building up a herd of pedigree

milking cattle and improving meadows and pastures up to the highest level of production.

Macdonald elicited all this over a dish of excellent Irish stew. He found Brian an alert, intelligent fellow: his background of sturdy self-reliance and farming skill had been invigorated not marred (as was sometimes the case) by his grammar-school education, and the latter had given him the ability to express himself in words, vigorously and without self-consciousness.

"Well, now I want you to tell me all that you can about Dick Greville," said Macdonald. "I've told you, in confidence, that someone tried to murder him as soon as he got to London and that his pockets were emptied, presumably to delay, or prevent, identification. Can you suggest any explanation?"

Brian pushed his plate away, put his elbows on the table and his chin on his big fists, and thought for a while before he answered. Then he said:

"I might suggest several, but I think it'd be fairer if I told you a bit more about Dick. Mrs. Greville told you how he was found that night of the Plymouth blitz?"

"Yes. She also told me that when he came back from Germany he was troubled in mind, and she had an idea his memory was coming back, vaguely and fitfully. Do you think that's true?"

"I know it is," replied Brian. "It happened in Germany. I found him in a frightful state one day, soon after we were stationed in Berlin. He suddenly burst out that he must have been a German. He remembered the language—not altogether, of course: at first just odd words, then phrases, and names of things, and how to pronounce the words he saw on shops, and notices in busses and trains."

"That's about the last thing I expected to hear," said Macdonald, and Brian nodded.

"Same here. At first I was simply stumped. You see we'd never done any German at school. I wondered if he'd learnt any at an earlier school, but he was only about eight when they found him on Roborough, and kids of eight don't learn much German at school. Dick was in an awful state about it. The thought of being a Jerry made him feel sick. And then I suddenly said, 'Don't be such a bloody fool. You couldn't have been German, because if you were, you'd have used German words when you began to talk again. You used English words—yes and no and please and thank you.' I know that's true," added Brian, "because I went and played with him as soon as he was well enough to play and the words he spoke were English."

"Do you think he used English words he'd picked up from Mrs. Greville?" asked Macdonald.

"No. It wasn't that, because he didn't pronounce them as she does. I don't mean he had a foreign accent, it was just different from Devon. You see we'd had a lot of evacuated kids in the village school, some from London and some from the north, and we noticed the different ways they talked. I thought Dick was a Londoner—but he soon picked up our way of talking and I never thought about it again—not until he told me this nightmare he'd got about being German."

"Did you do anything about it, or get any further towards an explanation?" asked Macdonald.

"Not so far as the language business was concerned," replied Brian. "You see, he made me promise not to tell anyone. He wanted to think things out for himself, and I knew he felt rotten over it. I tried to make him discuss it, I thought he'd feel better if we talked it out, but he went cagey and just shut up and I had to leave it alone. The next thing that happened was when we went to Cologne."

Brian had lifted his chin from his hands and he was fiddling with the knives and forks on the table, unconsciously arranging them in patterns and groups, like a boy playing with soldiers.

"He knew he'd been there before," he said slowly. "He recognised the cathedral: then, one day when we were on the outskirts of the town, where there hadn't been so much bombing, he said, 'There's an old house round the next corner with a lot of painted gables and timbering and a big copper beech in the garden, with a cedar tree near it.' And when we went to look, this house was there and the trees, just as he said."

"Did you do anything about that?" asked Macdonald patiently.

"Yes. I went there myself. They were Germans living there, and they talked quite a bit of English. I asked them if they knew who lived there before the war. They said it was a German pastor and his family—very good people. The Gestapo got the pastor for being anti-Hitler, and then the house was taken for an army officer's family. But they were all dead, the pastor and his family, and the army people, so I didn't really get any further."

Brian sighed, and rumpled up his fair hair. "I'd got frightfully worried about all this," he said. "I could see Dick was getting more and more het up over it. It wasn't only worrying about being a German, though he did get rather a thing about that, he had an awful sense of being frustrated, because he couldn't get

any further. Things wouldn't link up. And if he thought too much about it, he'd suddenly go off to sleep, like he did when he was a kid."

"Haven't you ever heard the expression 'a defence mechanism'?" asked Macdonald.

"I suppose so—read it in the papers, or heard it on the radio," said Brian, "but it never meant anything: just somebody else's jargon. Though now you've reminded me of it, I can see it does apply to Dick. You see, he even shut down on me, and he'd never done that before."

"Do you mean that you think he may remember more than he's admitted?"

"Yes. Something like that: probably not anything consecutive, because he promised he'd tell me if things ever really came back. Anyway, I had the sense to see he was getting broody and that he couldn't go on like that. They do have psychologists attached to the Army Medical Corps, you know, and I suggested he should go and talk things over with the M.O. But Dick wouldn't hear of it: he wouldn't see anybody connected with the Army. Then I asked if he'd go and see somebody after demob—somebody who didn't know anything about him. And he agreed. That's what he was going up to London for."

Brian stopped fiddling with his forks and knives and drummed with his fists on the table. "You started by asking me if I'd got any explanation of what might have happened to him at Paddington," he said slowly, "and I've told you all this yam about Germany, and his remembering disconnected things. I feel pretty bad about it. . . . Could it have preyed on his mind so that he—well, went round the bend . . . I mean . . . he got imagining things and attacked somebody . . . ?"

"No. That won't wash," said Macdonald. "The damage to Dick Greville wasn't done by anybody in self-defence. It was a savage attempt at murder, followed by an effort to conceal his identity." He paused, and then added: "Now I think it's time I asked a few questions. Mrs. Greville told me he was going to Reading University. Had he been to Reading, for an interview, or anything like that?"

"Yes, but that was over two years ago, before he did his army service. Our head at school sent him, to see if they'd take him, and it was all fixed up then. He hasn't been since."

"What sort of chap is Greville?" asked Macdonald. "Is he quiet or tough? What's he interested in?"

"He's quiet," rejoined the other. "As for tough—well, he's not the sort to get bullied. He doesn't give a damn for the things that amuse most chaps—skirts

or dance halls or cinemas or comic strips. You see—well living up on the moor as we both did, we weren't good at social events: we're both dead keen on farming. But we could both hit anybody who needed hitting. Some of the chaps thought we were flats—and if they got too funny we showed 'em where they got off. That went for both of us."

"What about sport—racing, dogs, and all the rest?"

Brian laughed. "Not he—nor me neither. We both play soccer: we know all about farm horses and sheep dogs, but not fancy ones. We've seen an occasional point to point and the usual local horse shows, but Dick's no gambler—no more than me. We saved all we could—and we knew what we were saving for." He stared at Macdonald. "I don't quite see where you're leading. Bad company? Gambling debts—bookies—all that rot? No. Nothing like that."

He pushed back his chair and burst out: "This is going all haywire, like one of those radio quiz programmes when the team gets bogged down. You can't think how crazy it seems to me to hear you asking questions about racing and dogs and gambling in connection with Dick. You're right off the beam."

"All right," said Macdonald, "but you might get it into your head that I don't ask questions without a reason for asking them. I've told you that somebody tried to murder Dick Greville. He travelled on a train that stopped at Reading. At Reading the station authorities had had some trouble with a gang of rowdies who were believed to be connected with the bookies who work the dog-racing business, and one of these rowdies got into the same compartment that Greville was travelling in, and, according to two witnesses, Greville not only spoke to this chap, but went up the platform with him at Paddington. Five minutes later Greville was bashed over the head with an iron bar."

"It just doesn't make sense," cried Brian.

"I've got to make sense of it, and you've got to try to help," said Macdonald. "In my experience, there's always an explanation if you sort facts into their places. Now here's another question. Do you remember any deserters from your unit while you were in the Army?"

Brian sat and cogitated, and Macdonald knew that in his careful, conscientious mind the young farmer was working out the implications of the question. Suddenly his face lightened: "I think I get the idea behind that one," he said. "I believe there were some chaps who packed up and beat it: not from our hut and nobody I remember personally. I expect battalion H.Q. could tell you—and the police know, don't they?"

Macdonald laughed—he couldn't help it—and Brian flushed red. "Sorry," he said. "That was a fool thing to say."

"I dare say I can get the information from our own records when you have told me the details of Greville's number, unit, and the rest," Macdonald replied.

Brian began to rummage in his pockets, and Macdonald produced pencil and notebook and handed them over. The young man wrote slowly and carefully, and when he had finished he added:

"I realise I must seem a fool to you, but all this has got me muddled. I don't even know how you traced Dick home—you said he'd got nothing on him to show who he was, didn't you?"

"I did. The process by which I traced him is what we call 'routine.' Doubtless you have your own routines, rotation of crops, breeding, and the like. I respect your skill, and all I ask is that you should realise that we know our job too. If I ask seemingly futile questions, there's probably a reason behind them."

"All right," said Brian. "Go ahead."

3

"I want to know about Dick Greville's home life," said Macdonald. "I didn't bother Mrs. Greville with questions, but I saw Mrs. Burrow for a moment or two. Are there any other members of the family?"

"No. There was a baby boy who died, and Margery. Mr. Greville's folks lived on Exmoor, and his brothers are sheep farming in Wales now. Mrs. Greville had married sisters, but one's in Canada and the other's dead, so apart from a few cousins there aren't any relatives of theirs about."

"Mrs. Burrow seemed very bitter about Dick, and she made no bones about saying so," said Macdonald.

"I know. I suppose you can't blame her," said Brian. "It was such a queer setup. When Dick first came and Mrs. Greville nursed him back to life and got him to talk, well, she got absolutely absorbed in him, and Margie was jealous. She was a queer-tempered girl, and she just wouldn't take it. I think she hated Dick. Anyway, she got a job as soon as she left school: she went to help Mrs. Yeo over at Brent Moor, and she got married before she was twenty, so they didn't really know much about each other—she and Dick, I mean."

"When Mr. Greville died, do you know how he left his property?"

Brian stared, and his face lengthened: he evidently didn't feel very happy over this question. "Not to Dick," he said quickly. "Everything was left to Mrs. Greville. There wasn't much money. On a farm your capital's all invested in the land and gear and stock. Moorcock's a good sheep farm, though you mightn't think it, and sheep mean money these days. Mrs. Greville's been used to sheep farming all her life, and she knows as much about it as her husband did."

There was silence for a while: Macdonald was pretty sure that Brian had followed the trend of the last questions and was troubled in consequence, but he made no further comment. At length Macdonald said:

"Mrs. Burrow complained that Dick had had everything—schooling, pocket money, indulgence—and she added: 'He'll get the farm, too, likely as not.' "

"She'd damn well no right to say a thing like that," cried Brian indignantly. "Mrs. Greville will do what's right by both of them. It's not true Dick had everything and Margie nothing. Margie had her rake-off when she got married. Damn the woman, she's a proper mischief maker. I know what she's after——" He broke off, his face flushed, his eyes angry. Then he said: "Look here. I've got to say it. I don't like Margie: I admit she's got a grievance, but she can't be fair. All the same, she hasn't had anything to do with . . . all this. I'm certain she hasn't. I just don't believe it."

"All right. Let's leave it at that," replied Macdonald. "Now do you know where Dick was going to stay in London?"

"No. Not for certain. I don't think he knew either. Before we went into the Army he and I went up to London for a two days' beano, and we stayed at a small hotel near Paddington Station. There are a lot of them, bed and breakfast places, pretty mouldy, but all we could afford. I expect Dick would have gone there again, or somewhere nearby."

"Right. Now can you tell me the name of the psychologist he was going to see?"

"Yes. I can. I got the name for him from the M.O. I've got it written down in my pocketbook. Wait a jiffy and I'll find it." Brian went and rummaged in a table drawer, muttering: "I know I've got it somewhere. The M.O. said this chap was one of the sanest men in that job. I wanted to make sure he was good, because one hears some rum stories. . . . Here it is. I knew I'd kept it."

He handed a slip of paper over to Macdonald: the name and address were written carefully and legibly:

Dr. David Garstang. 500 Wimpole St., London, W.1.

CHAPTER NINE

MACDONALD drove on to Branscombe when he left Brian Salcombe. Branscombe was the Burrows' farm and it was a very different proposition from the grey harshness of Moorcock, away up on the moor. Margie Burrow's home approximated more to the popular idea of a farm in Devon: set in a wide, well-watered valley, its pastures and meadows green even in December, the farmhouse whitewashed and thatched. It was a comfortable-looking building, sturdy and squat, with deep eaves and fine stone chimneys.

When Macdonald went into the yard, he noticed that no smoke was rising from the chimneys and the back door was shut. When he knocked, the only response he got was from a dog, chained up to its kennel. Its barking brought a farm lad out from one of the barns, a tow-haired, rosy-cheeked youth who stared at Macdonald in surprise.

"I want to see Mr. Burrow," said the chief inspector. "I heard he'd been away. Is he back home yet?"

"He came back, but he's not in," replied the lad. "I think he's gone over Sampford Spinney way to see some heifers."

"Do you know when he'll be back?"

"Couldn't say. Mrs. Burrow, she's away too, up at Moorcock, so likely he'll stay out to 's supper. Jake and me's got all the milking to do."

"Right—then I won't keep you," replied Macdonald.

The chief inspector's next business was to consult with the county police. He drove back to Plymouth, and was soon in conference with the inspector on duty at police headquarters. This officer, a man of Macdonald's age named Fordworthy, had already been informed that the C.I.D. man was in his area, for the police are punctilious over such matters.

Fordworthy, grey-haired, solid, and robust, greeted Macdonald cheerfully. "You're welcome," he said heartily. "You don't remember me, but I remember you. Your chaps came and lent us a hand when we most needed it—'41, that

was. Well, have you found out what you wanted?"

"Some of it," rejoined Macdonald. "It's a longish story, and a damned queer one, too."

For the next ten minutes Ford worthy sat back and enjoyed hearing an expert relate the essential facts concerning the assault on Richard Greville and the work the C.I.D. had done on the case.

"Well, first I'd like to say it's a fair treat to hear a report told like that," said Fordworthy. "You've got a remarkable lot of facts in a precious short time, Chief."

"We've been lucky," said Macdonald. "We've had good witnesses who came forward and told clear stories, and they corroborated one another at nearly all points. At a first glance you might have thought it was hopeless to get evidence about a railway journey on an evening like that—I wish you could have seen our London particular. But as it turned out, the fog made people particularly on the *qui vive.* The platform men at Reading remembered details which they might have forgotten on an ordinary evening. I suppose everybody's nerves were on edge and they were more alert than usual. The girl—Miss Dillon—remembered details of the journey because it ended as such a nightmare of a journey. But the trouble is, as you can see for yourself, we've got a whole variety of possibilities. And one variation pertains to your district."

"Yes. I see that, all right. We'll get that one sorted out for you," replied Fordworthy. He stopped and pondered, his brows knit over his clear blue eyes. "I remember the story about the boy they found on Roborough Down," he said. "It was a remarkable story, but there were so many things happening just then, and so many hideous tragedies going on under your very eyes, that you were only too thankful to leave well alone if anything was well. And the Grevilles were good to that boy, by God they were."

"Yes, I've grasped that, all right," said Macdonald. "What we've got to sort out is where the trouble arose: at what point in his queer history did Richard Greville arouse the sort of animosity which resulted in an attempt to murder him. I don't think we've got the most essential data yet—but I may be wrong."

"One of the rummest points in the whole story is the way this Dr. Garstang comes into it," said Fordworthy.

"Yes. I found that rather a facer," agreed Macdonald, "but it's not so startling when you consider it. Garstang is very well known: his name would be put forward by any informed doctor in response to an enquiry for an able

psychiatrist."

Fordworthy nodded, and then said: "This psychology business—how much do you believe in it, Chief?"

"I don't know," replied Macdonald slowly. "I might say I'm midway between two opposite poles—complete acceptance and profound scepticism. I've heard modem thinkers claim that the development of psychiatric knowledge and practice is the most important contribution ever made to human welfare, because it's the study of mind. And then I look at the record of mankind in the years since psychology has been practised clinically, so to speak, and I begin to wonder."

"By the Lord, it's enough to make anyone wonder," broke out Fordworthy. "Is juvenile delinquency decreasing because each of the young varmints is examined by a psychologist? You ask the approved-schools' staffs what they think—they won't hand out many testimonials to the psychologists."

"Possibly not, but the reforming of young delinquents doesn't impinge on this case. I do believe it's true that, given time, a psychiatrist can bring to light facts which a patient has forgotten. I think we've got to accept as proven that there is a subconscious mind, and that memories which have sunk into the subconscious can affect a person's mentality and even their health. If young Greville recovers, and they seem to think he's going to, this Dr. Garstang may well be able to get him to remember what happened to him in 1941, and where he originated."

"And do you expect those facts to solve the present problem—why he was batted over the head in a London fog in 1952?" asked Fordworthy.

"Again, I don't know. But I believe that it's possible that his mental state may have had a direct bearing on the problem. You see, the lad was in an abnormal state, troubled and bewildered by a confusion of half memories which he couldn't connect up or rationalise. This may have sent him off the rails and made him do things which are foreign to his norm."

"I don't quite get you," said Fordworthy. "D'you mean that a decently brought up lad like young Greville might go to the dogs so to speak because of this inner conflict, or whatever you call it?"

Macdonald chuckled. "You may be nearer the truth than you meant," he said. "Go to the dogs—quite literally: go out for excitement of any kind to get relief from the turmoil of mind which was driving him mad. That would provide one explanation of an aspect of the story which is incomprehensible at the moment: in other words, a link between the line Reeves is chasing in

London and the line I've been following today."

"Well—it's a bit too psychological for me to cotton on to," said Fordworthy. "I leave that to you. However, you've given me a plain job to do, and I'll get on with it. Now what about you, Chief? You'll be staying here tonight?"

"No, I don't think so," said Macdonald. "I'd meant to, but I've got a better idea. I'm going to get young Salcombe to leave his farm for a day or two and come up to London with me. And if he says there's no one to milk his cows and fodder his stock I'm going to rely on you to produce somebody who's competent to take the job on for a couple of days."

"Well—that's a facer!" exclaimed Fordworthy.

"Don't tell me you don't know most of the farmers who come to market," said Macdonald. "Possibly it won't be necessary. Salcombe may have someone he can leave in charge—but he's coming up to London with me. He can identify Greville—it's got to be done by somebody who knows him—and he can see Garstang and tell him about Greville, and I shall be there as observer."

"Yes . . . I see," said Fordworthv.

"Salcombe's got a telephone. I saw the line crossing his land," said Macdonald. 'Til have a word with him now, and then drive straight out to him at Long Barrow."

"I reckon it'll take more than a few words to make him leave his farm," said Fordworthy. "He's the keenest young farmer in the district."

"I can well believe it, but he's also Dick Greville's friend," replied Macdonald.

2

Brian Salcombe agreed at once to Macdonald's request.

"It's funny, but I thought about it as soon as you'd gone," he said. "I might have thought of it earlier, but I was in such a mix-up, trying to puzzle things out."

"What about your farm?" asked Macdonald.

"I'll fix that," replied Brian. "I've got a good lad, and he can come and sleep in for a night or two, and John Worley will come along and see everything's O.K. It's not like harvest or haymaking. Just routine as you say."

"Good. I'll drive out and fetch you. Did they teach you to drive a car in the Army?"

"Did they not. I can drive anything—or almost anything."

"Then you can take share and share alike with me and we'll see if we can make it by midnight."

The December afternoon was closing in when Macdonald picked Brian Salcombe up at the gate of Long Barrow about half-past three. "D'you know the road to Exeter?" asked Macdonald, and Brian nodded.

"A darned sight better than you do, I expect. An uncle of mine had an old van, and business often took him to Exeter—and me with him."

"Good. Then you can drive and I can go to sleep if I want to."

Salcombe was a good driver: Macdonald didn't have to keep an eye on him for long to discover that. He handled a strange car with the certainty that only comes from experience, he drove on his own side of the road, and he took no chances, but he was the reverse of a loiterer. It was a clear evening, and they made good speed. Once he had decided that Salcombe knew his onions, Macdonald sat back and enjoyed being driven, while his mind worried away at the different threads of his problem. Brian got them around Exeter so neatly that Macdonald hardly noticed the city.

"Honiton, Yeovil and A. 30?" asked the young farmer.

"Good enough," said Macdonald, glancing at his watch: it was now five o'clock. "We'll pull up at the first filling station which has a cafe, get a cup of tea, and then I'll take over for a bit."

They reached Yeovil, with Macdonald driving, just after six, changed places again, and Brian drove on to Salisbury, where they wolfed down sausage rolls and jam tarts at a convenient café, and then Macdonald said he would drive again. It wasn't very long before Brian was fast asleep. Macdonald guessed that he'd been up by six o'clock that morning to get the milking done, and that he'd done the sort of day's work in the open air that makes all farmers drowsy by the time they get a chance to sit down. Basingstoke, Staines, and then the approaches to London: cars, lorries, busses, Green Line coaches, bicycles. Macdonald drove on steadily, skilfully, his hands and feet responding automatically to traffic and traffic lights, pedestrians and policemen. It wasn't much after eleven o'clock when he pulled up outside the block of riverside flats where he lived, and Brian Salcombe was still asleep. Macdonald shook him before he woke up. "Sorry. Where are we?"

"London. This is where I live. Bundle out. There's a bed of sorts for you."

"Here, shan't I go and find a room somewhere? You don't want to be bothered with me."

"I shall be much less bothered having you safely in my own place than wondering if you've got knocked over the head or fallen under a bus hunting a bed in London—so heave yourself out."

"Put the car away?" enquired Brian.

"No. I may have to go out again."

"Christmas! You do believe in working," yawned Brian.

Macdonald seized his arm, shoved him through a swing door, across a brightly lighted lobby and into an automatic lift, a shining, silent, swiftly moving cage. Seeing the big, fair, weatherbeaten lad in that ultramodern box of chromium and high-glaze panelling, Macdonald couldn't make up his mind whether Brian made the lift look ridiculous or the lift made Brian look so. They got out and walked down a long corridor with identical front doors on both sides of it: owing to the floor covering, their steps made no sound and the place was curiously silent.

"Cripes—this place'd give me the jitters: it's not human," said Brian.

"You get used to it," said Macdonald. "It took me quite a time, but now I don't even notice that it's a repeat pattern on a large scale. I better warn you that every corridor is identical, so if you get out at the wrong floor you'll be in a muddle. Hullo, I've got a visitor."

There was a tall, narrow window at the far end of the corridor, and a man stood there, looking out. In spite of the fact that it was nearly midwinter, he had managed to open the window, so that the cold air from outside was defeating the very efficient central heating system of the huge block.

"Hullo, Reeves. You'll be getting some bitter protests from my fellow warreners if you freeze the corridor."

Reeves chucked his cigarette out of the window and closed the latter. "Sorry, but these corridors get me nearer to being frightened than anything that's happened since the V.2.s, Jock. They're superefhcient, superheated and generally reminiscent of a communal tomb."

Macdonald unlocked the door of his flat—it was the last door on the left.

"You two chaps seem in complete agreement over the amenities of one of the most convenient blocks of flats in London," he said. "This is Brian Salcombe: he's come up to see his friend in St. Monica's Hospital—name of Richard Greville. Peter Reeves, Salcombe, a friend of my own."

"Put it here, mate," grinned Reeves, holding out his hand. "You're right about the lifts and corridors: they're enough to send a good chap wrong, but look out of this window—it makes up for the architectural dentistry in the

approaches."

Still completely bemused, Brian went to the wide, uncurtained window and looked down: far below he saw the Thames swirling past the embankment, shining under London's lights, the flood tide lapping the river wall, and a moored chain of barges bobbing in midstream.

"Losh—it's pretty good," he said, "but I shouldn't care to swim in it . . ."

Macdonald laughed. "I tried it—once, and once was enough. The river police fished me out half drowned, with another chap in tow. Now you're going to bed, laddie. There's always a bed ready and waiting. Do you want some food, or a drink?"

Brian gave a huge, face-splitting yawn.

"Go to bed, mate," advised Reeves. "I'll bring you in a cup of tea with a spot of something in it before you've got your boots off."

Brian was too sleepy to argue. He found himself propelled into a bedroom, the pyjamas and washing gear produced from his own haversack; by the time he was turning in Reeves appeared with the promised cup of tea.

"Get outside this and it'll be morning before you know it," he said, "as far as it can be said that there is a morning in London at this time of year."

"Thanks a lot," said Brian. "Are you a cop too?"

"Sure. C.I.D. Metropolitan Police. You'll be well looked after. By the way, I rang the hospital half an hour ago. They say Greville's still doing nicely—quite comfortable, I was told. They're as proud of him as they would be of flourishing quads."

"It's no end decent of you——" began Brian.

"That's O.K. What we call routine. That contraption works the light. Good night and all that."

Reeves went back to the sitting room, where Macdonald was deep in an armchair, the teapot beside him, and a bottle of scotch beside that.

"I feel I've earned that one," he said. "How's things your end?"

"So-so. Let's have yours first," replied Reeves.

Once again Macdonald set out his facts, tersely, in the main, though he described Moorcock so that Reeves became vividly aware of the grey farm buildings and the wind-bent trees in the little hollow high up on the moor. He was silent for a moment or two when Macdonald had finished speaking.

"Quite a story, Jock. What was it you said earlier on—something about not getting obsessed by the racketeer boys in the setup? 'It may be something quite different, some private hate.' Well, it looks as though there might be 'private

hate.' "

"There often is," said Macdonald. "And in this case there's a vein of abnormality running through the story. When I was up there at Moorcock, talking first to that frail old woman who adored the boy, and then to the bitter young woman who hated him, the pattern seemed likely enough. However hard you try not to be affected by environment, it's bound to count in arriving at a judgment, whether it's the moor or the back streets of Paddington. And now, what's yours? You didn't come and wait in that corridor you dislike so much just for the pleasure of hearing me talk about Dartmoor."

"Quite true," said Reeves, "though when I had your message saying you'd be back by midnight, I thought you'd probably make it a spot earlier. My bit's not so good. I said that this case might be remarkable because there was an indication of a witness to the murder—the chap under the trolley. Well, I think we've got him. He was picked up on the permanent way this morning, just outside Westbourne Park Station. Fallen out of a train apparently. He was alive—more or less—when they picked him up. I spent most of today sitting beside his bed, just in case he uttered. He died about six o'clock."

"Without uttering?"

"He only said a few words anybody could understand, and they came out quite clearly: 'Five hundred, by tomorrow.' "

"How did you satisfy yourself he was the chap you think he was?"

"His coat," said Reeves. "He'd squirmed through that muck under the barrow or trolley or whatever it was. A sample was scraped up and sent to the lab: paraffin, lubricating oil, tar, stone dust from the shifted kerbstone, and a dab of dextrine paste—the adhesive they slap railway labels on with. I sent his coat up to the lab, and they got the same mixture from the stain in front of it and from his trouser legs as well. They were the only clothes he'd got. He was broke." He sat for a moment in silence, and then went on: "The local chaps let me know about the casualty as soon as it was reported—thought I might be interested. By gum, I was. I went for his clothes at once—and it came off."

"What do the railway chaps say?"

"They can't be definite. The probability is that he fell out of a stopping train on the local line and was half stunned, then he was hit and thrown clear by an outgoing express on the main line—but the converse may as well be true. He was found by a linesman around nine o'clock: it was scarcely light then, one of those perishing dark mornings when nobody's fool enough to look out of a railway window and they wouldn't see anything if they did."

"Ticket in his pocket?"

"Return half to Reading, punched at Paddington. And nine-pence in coppers and a lot of betting slips and some pawn tickets, plus an envelope with a threatening letter in it. Name of Bert Lewis. He had a room in Lazenby Place, off Harrow Road. Owes three weeks' rent and no assets. He'd pawned his other clothes, his cigarette case, his watch and his best shoes. So there we are. When he last had a square meal is anybody's guess—and they found a door unlatched on the slow train to Reading."

Macdonald listened to Reeves's staccato statements, filling in all the implications for himself and considering the omissions. The two men knew one another so well that there was seldom any need for explanations between them.

"I take it his face is too damaged to be identifiable?" said Macdonald.

Reeves nodded. "His own mother might know him: I doubt if anybody else would. The surgeons are tidying up what's left in the hope of making it easier, but his face was properly mucked up. He might be anybody—as his landlord said when asked to oblige."

Again they sat silent for a moment. "It's a matter of tying it up, your lot and mine," said Reeves at length. "It may be there's two lots of trouble. There's this chap in the mortuary, who's almost certainly the chap who squirmed under the trolley. My own guess is that he's connected with the Reading rowdies. He was broke, couldn't pay the bookies, and came back to London on the lookout for anything he could grab, win, or scrounge. Realised there was a row going on as he came out of Paddington Station and squirmed under a trolley to listen. In that sense he connects up with Waterloo—sorry, young Greville—but may be only as a witness. Wouldn't you say that if you play welsher to a tough lot of bookies, anything may happen to you—from getting quodded for forging cheques, to getting tipped out of a train on a dark morning?"

Macdonald nodded. "Yes. I'd also say that if you happened to witness a murder and tried to cash in on your knowledge, there's also a fair chance you might be tipped out of a train. What are the chances of getting any information about him?"

"Pretty thin," said Reeves. "Too many things have been happening: Barney O'Flynn under a lorry. Henry Brown coshed, and Bert Lewis on the permanent way. I'm pretty certain all three of them were at the Whistling Pig last night, but nobody's going to remember anything about them without a little inducement." Again he paused, and then asked: "Any chance that this

young Greville did go crackers a bit, to the extent of getting mixed up in things that weren't his usual line of country?"

"It's a possibility," said Macdonald. "Salcombe ought to be able to help us there: if we give him time, he ought to be able to tell us quite a bit more—and there's Dr. Garstang. He could tell us the probabilities about the workings of a troubled mind."

"Garstang," murmured Reeves. "He studied in Vienna and practised in Berlin: quite an international reputation."

"What an industrious chap you are," murmured Macdonald.

"He's in all the reference books," said Reeves.

"Well come on: what are you toying with now?" asked Macdonald.

"I only wondered if there was a hundred-to-one chance that Greville had already consulted him," said Reeves.

Macdonald chuckled. "I'm prepared to consider it, but not tonight," he said firmly. "I've got to come down and put the car away: shall I run you home?"

"No, thanks. I'll look in at C.O. and see if there's anything else—and there's always some chap on duty in a good car and nothing to do."

CHAPTER TEN

SARAH DILLON lived on the St. John's Wood side of Maida Vale, less than five minutes' walk from Maida Vale tube station: she shared a ground-floor flat with Elizabeth Maine, a girl slightly senior to Sally, who had trained as a masseuse and worked in St. Monica's Hospital. The house in which they had a flat was one of the old, stucco-covered mansions which had been "converted" into separate habitations. While there were some drawbacks in comparison with modem flats, the two girls had the advantage of one big, beautifully proportioned sitting room opening on to the garden, even if their bedrooms, kitchenette, and bathroom showed very plainly that they were sections of another big room and the passage which once ran between them. Both girls had some income of their own apart from the salaries they earned, and they lived very comfortably, the chores being done by a "daily," the latter rather mutable characters, who came and went somewhat frequently.

Three mornings after Sally had returned from Devonshire, Elizabeth came in to her breakfast (which consisted of orange juice), saying: "I'm afraid our Mittel-europa treasure isn't all that, Sally. I'm pretty certain she rummaged through my belongings yesterday."

"Oh dear," said Sally, "and she seemed so nice. I admit that I did wonder why such a pleasant and competent creature wanted to take on a humdrum job like ours—but she did have good references."

"They all do. It saves employers so much trouble to give a nice reference."

"What have you lost? Nylons?" asked Sally.

"Oh no. I don't think I've lost anything so far as I can tell: but I don't like feeling that somebody snoops. Have you noticed anything, Sal?"

"Well . . . it seems ridiculous, but since you've mentioned it I'll go and look."

Sally jumped up and Elizabeth put in some time on her fingernails. She didn't use colour on her nails—she considered it inappropriate for a masseuse—but she kept her hands exquisitely and took a lot of trouble with them. In

appearance Elizabeth (known as Libby by her familiars) was a good foil to Sally: slender, dark, with a pointed, oval face, Italianate in colouring and the slight aquilinity of profile, Libby was beautiful in the eyes of those who admired a touch of the classic, but less pleasing to connoisseurs of the buxom. Also she was intelligent, but her analytical mind had been described as malicious by those who disliked her. You either liked Elizabeth or disliked her: Sally liked her, and found her a reliable and companionable housemate.

"Well?" asked Elizabeth, when Sally came running back.

"You're perfectly right, Libby. Someone has been taking liberties. It seems so dotty: what do you think has gone from my room?"

"At a guess—some face powder, not too much, likewise some Elizabeth Arden face cream, carefully spooned out, and a couple of cigarettes: moderation in all things for our Rosa."

"You're quite wrong. It's books. Three Penguins—all 'bloods.' "

"Well, that's the latest; is she studying crime?"

"I don't quite like it," said Sally slowly. "One of them was that boy's—the boy in the train. It was on the table by my bed. When I went to bed last night I was dog-tired and I didn't read, but I know that book was by my bed when I went out yesterday morning."

Elizabeth looked at her quizzically. "Sentiment, Sally—or something quite different?"

"Quite different," replied Sally. "I didn't think of it at the time, but I suppose I ought to have told the Scotland Yard man I'd got that Penguin. You see, he—the boy, I mean—had scribbled in the back of it: odd names and bits of words, as though he were experimenting with sounds, or trying to remember. There wasn't anything that made sense, at least not to me." Elizabeth worked away carefully with her nail file. "It's a bit queer," she said. "Perhaps it wasn't Rosa."

Sally put down her coffee cup and grimaced. "Oh, don't let's get dramatising it," she protested.

"I don't think I'm given to dramatics," said Elizabeth, "but there's something odd about the whole setup, isn't there? When you told me a chief inspector from Scotland Yard had been asking questions, it did occur to me that it's the Criminal Investigation Department which was getting busy, not the usual London bobbies who trot round about traffic accidents."

"I didn't think about that—he seemed such a normal likeable person I suppose I took him for granted—and there was the fog," said Sally.

"I know," said Elizabeth evenly, "but I think it mightn't be a bad idea to ring

up your chief inspector and tell him about the book. If it's only Rosa it might do her a lot of good to be talked to by Scotland Yard. Besides, it'll straighten things up so far as you're concerned. I suppose you ought to have told him about that book."

"I should have if I'd remembered," said Sally indignantly. "Well, you've remembered now. Oh Lord—it's time I was pushing off. Are you feeling jittered about this, Sal? Would you rather I waited until you've said your piece over the phone?"

"Heavens, no. I'll do what you suggest, because I suppose I ought to, but I'll bet it's Rosa. You get on. I know I'm a country cousin, but I'm not really lacking."

Sally sat down and dialled Whitehall 1212 feeling a bit foolish. When she asked for Chief Inspector Macdonald she was asked in turn for her own name and address and then told to hold on, all in the most normal way in the world. A few seconds later another voice spoke to her—not Macdonald's voice, but a kindly, homely, sensible voice which seemed to Sally to be that of an elderly man. "The chief inspector isn't here at the moment, Miss Dillon. Would you care to leave a message?"

"Oh . . . well, I saw Mr. Macdonald yesterday. It was about the boy who was in an accident at Paddington."

"Yes, yes," said the fatherly-sounding man at the other end. "I know your name, and that your evidence was very helpful. Now I hope you're not worried about anything."

"I am," said Sally; "it's mainly because I forgot to tell Mr. Macdonald something I ought to have told him. When I was in the train, that boy—Richard—lent me a book and said I could keep it. It was only a Penguin, so I did. And he'd scribbled some odd notes at the end."

"That's excellent," said the encouraging voice.

"But it isn't," said Sally. "The book's gone. Somebody's taken it. We think it might be our daily woman. The girl who lives with me noticed somebody had been rummaging in her bedroom, and when I went to look in my room I found that three Penguins had disappeared. I expect it sounds pretty silly to you, but I thought I ought to let you know."

"Quite right. Very sensible of you," came the approving answer. "Where are you speaking from, Miss Dillon? Are you at home?"

"Yes, I am, but it's time I went out to my job."

"Now don't bother about your job for the moment. I think I can get hold of

the chief inspector in a few minutes. He'll want to hear about this. Will you promise to stay at home for another ten minutes? We'll ring you again before the ten minutes is up."

"Well—if you say so," said Sally.

"Thank you very much, Miss Dillon."

Sally wandered back into her bedroom. It was a slip of a room and the tall window was cut in half by the partition which divided Sally's room from Elizabeth's. She looked again to make sure that the Penguins hadn't got pushed behind anything, or fallen under the bed: *Flowers for the fudge* and *Verdict of Twelve* had been in the book trough on the mantelpiece, but they weren't there now: *The Franchise Affair* had been on the table beside her bed, where she had put it when she unpacked her things that foggy night—Monday night. It was still there on Tuesday night because she had finished reading it and noticed the scribbles on the flyleaf at the end. It hadn't occurred to her that they might have had any significance: she had been sleepy and had only thought how illegible the writing was. Last night—Wednesday—she and Libby had both gone out, and they had been talking till nearly midnight and Sally had gone to sleep without reading at all. She couldn't remember if the book had been there or not the previous night. She opened the flap of her small writing bureau and studied the contents of the pigeonholes; it was quite tidy—Sally was a very tidy girl—but somehow it didn't look quite right. The pattern seemed wrong, but before she could make up her mind what it was which looked unfamiliar, the telephone rang and she hurried into the sitting room to answer it.

The voice was Macdonald's this time: Sally recognised it at once with its Scots intonation, which was really no more than a particular distinctness of consonants.

"Good morning, Miss Dillon. Thank you for letting us know about that book. I'll come round and see you if I may; I can reach you in about a quarter of an hour."

"The only thing is that I ought to be on my way to Dr. Garstang's. I'm late starting already. He likes getting his letters out of the way before patients arrive."

"I think the letters could wait for once," said Macdonald. "I'll have a message sent through to him that it's my fault you're delayed, so don't worry. I'll be with you quite shortly."

"All right," said Sally, and then added in a rush: "I shall be so glad to see you. I still hope it's only Rosa, but I don't like it very much."

"Now don't start worrying. We'll see to it," said Macdonald.

2

It was less than a quarter of an hour before the chief inspector rang the bell and Sally had made her bed, tidied her room, and put the breakfast things away. (Sally liked porridge and an egg to start the day on: she had no patience with orange juice only for breakfast.) Macdonald came and sat down in the sitting room, gave Sally a cigarette, and listened to her story.

"Can you remember at all what was written in that book?" he asked, but she shook her head.

"I don't think I can. It wasn't words—not a sentence or anything: more likely a name. You know when you can't remember a name how you get an idea that it begins with a particular letter—though you're often wrong about the letter—and you fumble in your mind, trying to sort sounds out. It looked as though he'd been trying to do that on paper."

"Yes. That's very descriptive," said Macdonald. "Now Dr. Garstang said you were a visualiser. I am too, to some extent, so I know just what he means. Will you take a piece of paper sometime and try scribbling on it to see if you can reproduce the shapes you saw?"

"Yes. I'll try—but I don't think it registered, not consciously, anyhow." She paused, and then asked: "Is it important?"

"I don't know: I've no means of telling, but I should have liked to have the opportunity of judging," said Macdonald.

"Have you found out who he is?" asked Sally.

"Yes," replied Macdonald. "I'm quite willing to tell you about him. provided you'll promise not to repeat what I say: I mean not repeat it to anybody, however trustworthy you know them to be, because if you repeat a thing once it becomes very easy to repeat it again."

'Til promise: I won't even tell Libby," said Sally.

"Very well. His name is Richard Greville and his home is up on the moor towards Princetown. It was what you told me that enabled us to trace him so easily. The farm where he lives is so remote that they don't get a daily paper and their radio is an old battery set which often runs down. Greville had recently finished his National Service and was intending to go on to Reading University to study agriculture. He had been at a good grammar school and is

an intelligent lad, I gather."

"That all fits," said Sally, "but it doesn't explain why he seemed so queer."

"As a small boy he lost his memory, probably due to experience of the Plymouth blitz," said Macdonald, "and his people think his memory was coming back, not as a whole, but in odd bits, and it worried him. I haven't time to tell you the whole story, but that's enough to explain why you found him so troubled. But there's one thing I think you've got to be told. He wasn't hurt by accident. He was deliberately attacked."

"Libby said it must be that—because the C.I.D. were on to it."

"Well, she was right. Now, about this book. Will you let me look round your flat on my own account?"

"Yes. Of course." Sally jumped up. "I'll just show you which is my room." She glanced at the clock. "It's half-past nine. Rosa ought to be here. She's supposed to work from quarter-past nine to quarter-past eleven—so perhaps it was Rosa."

She showed Macdonald the different doors: "My room, Libby's room, kitchen-dining room, bathroom. That one's a cupboard where we lock up anything we want to lock up, though we've neither of us got anything valuable. Now I'll leave you to it. I shall be in the sitting room if you want me."

It took Macdonald a very few minutes to discover that if he had wanted to "effect an entrance" into this flat from the garden he could have done so quite easily. The catches on the windows would have given him no trouble. He looked round Sally's neat little bedroom, examined some of her books, and found that they had all got her name written in them. The writing bureau was unfastened: she evidently didn't keep many letters, but there was an address book, a small file of receipted bills and a few unpaid ones, neatly clipped together, in addition to writing paper, envelopes, and postcards. It was all very tidy, everything in its proper place—and consequently very easy to search. Elizabeth Maine's room was also tidy: it was a severe room, no photographs in evidence, only one picture (a reproduction of a Dürer engraving). Elizabeth was definitely a selective person, mused Macdonald: her clothes were few but good: her shoes neatly treed, her stockings and nylon underwear in immaculate little piles. There was a bookcase holding some books pertaining to her work and a few novels—Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, Charles Morgan, and Joseph Conrad.

Macdonald again studied all the window catches carefully, but could find no sign of a forced entry, though one of the latches on a sash window was so

loose that a thin knife could have been slipped between the sashes to force the catch back without leaving a mark.

Returning to Sally in the sitting room, he said: "I can't find any sign of anybody getting in—and Rosa evidently doesn't keep to her appointed hours. You're sure there's nothing else missing?"

"I don't think so, though somebody went through my writing bureau. Everything's there, but its position has just altered a little."

Macdonald nodded: "I'm sure you'd notice: you're both very tidy girls. Now tell me this: you say that young Greville gave you his Penguin: did you by any chance exchange books and give him yours?"

"Yes. I did. Mine was a Ngaio Marsh."

"And was your name written in it?"

"Yes. I always write my name in books: you're more likely to get them back when people borrow them. How did you guess all that?"

"It wasn't very difficult," said Macdonald. "Now will you tell me a bit about yourself. You said your home is in Kingsbridge: were you born in Devon?"

"Oh no, I was born in London—near Regent's Park. It's the usual story for a Londoner of my age—I'm not quite twenty-one. In 1939 I was seven and my sister was five, so Mummy took us away from London and we stayed at a farm near Kingsbridge. Then we got a little house in Kingsbridge and Daddy came down to stay with us when he could. He was a doctor: he died early in 1945, of pneumonia, they say. It was really overwork. My mother decided to stay in Devon; we'd got fond of the little house and there wasn't too much money. Susan, my sister, lives with Mummy. Dr. Garstang got to know us in Devon: he spent his holidays there when he could. When I'd finished at school, he said if I learnt to type and all that I could come to him as his secretary. Is that what you wanted to know?"

Macdonald smiled at her. "Yes. You're a very good witness, you state the essential facts clearly. This queer story seems rooted in Devon, doesn't it? Was Dr. Garstang born in Devon?"

"No. He was born abroad. In Germany, I think. He's keen on walking and sailing, and he's got fond of Dartmoor and the coast. He used to keep a boat at Salcombe, and he's often taken me sailing round Bolt Head and across Bigbury Bay up to Devonport. It's such a gorgeous coast—but you don't want to hear me enthusing about Devon."

"I wish I did," said Macdonald soberly. "I don't want to frighten you or worry you, Miss Dillon, but I've got to say this: by sheer chance you've got

involved in a problem which has very ugly possibilities. When Richard Greville was knocked down, his pockets were emptied and his haversack taken. The Penguin you gave him in exchange for his was either in his pocket or his haversack, and your name was written in it. Sarah Dillon isn't a common name—and it's in the telephone book. It would have been very easy for someone to come along here and search while you and Miss Maine were out and the unreliable Rosa not yet arrived. I don't know that that was what happened, but it might have been."

"But why? How could anybody have known that he'd scribbled in that book?"

"I don't know, but the fact that Greville had a book with your name written in it might have suggested an exchange to somebody else, just as it did to me. I'll do my best to have you looked after, but please be very sensible. Don't go strolling around in lonely places: travel by bus for the time being—I'm a great believer in busses."

Sally laughed. "All right—but it all seems so mad."

"Madness can be pretty grim," said Macdonald. "I'm going to send a man along to improve the catches on your windows. Also, I'd like one of our women officers to give your Rosa the once-over. Rosa has a latchkey, I take it?"

"Of course. She's got to get in. She had a good reference—I wrote about it."

"To whom?"

"Oh, a Mrs. Moore, in Finchley Road: about two thousand Finchley Road—it's an awful road, it goes on and on. But I've got the letter . . . oh dear, you're making me suspicious of everything. If that letter's gone, it must have been Rosa."

She jumped up and ran across the room to her bedroom, returning a moment later. "It has gone: that's what she went to my desk for, so I couldn't check up. . . . I expect she answered my letter herself."

"Well, don't worry about Rosa. I've got an officer outside in my car who will come and wait to see if Rosa turns up."

Sally sat curled up in her chair, very intent, flushed, and bright-eyed. "I hope it was Rosa who took the Penguins too," she said, "but I do wish I could remember what Richard scrawled in his . . . I wonder if hypnotism would bring it back."

"What on earth do you mean?" demanded Macdonald.

"Don't sound so scornful. It's quite scientific. If you've once seen a thing,

you don't forget it for quite some time, it just goes into your subconscious: an analyst can help you to fish it out again by suggesting to you under hypnosis that you can remember it if you only connect things up properly—memory's a sort of chain, everything's linked up."

"So it may be, and hypnotism may be quite scientific, as you say, but I don't want you to invoke that sort of science on our account," replied Macdonald.

"Sheer prejudice!" said Sally. "I'm glad you said that. It makes me feel less inferior."

"I am a hidebound reactionary and quite unrepentant about it," said Macdonald. "I am now going to introduce you to a very efficient young C.I.D. officer—Miss Jean Waring. We will leave her here to consider Rosa, and I will drive you to Wimpole Street to cope with the neglected mail."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MACDONALD had meant to spend the morning with Brian Salcombe, but when Sally Dillon's message reached him, the chief inspector changed his plans. Thus Brian found himself in the company of Inspector Jenkins, a stout, cheerful man who had grown grey in the service of the C.I.D. Jenkins's retiring age had overtaken him some time ago, but Jenkins didn't want to retire, and Macdonald didn't want to lose him: stout Jenkins undoubtedly was, and a slow mover these days, but his long experience and shrewd judgment made up for his decreasing mobility, and nobody at C.O. had as long a memory as Jenkins concerning the methods, characters, and peculiarities of the old lag class—the recidivists, whose motto was an inveterate: "Next time lucky."

Jenkins first took Brian to St. Monica's Hospital, Paddington. They left Scotland Yard in a police car, and Jenkins kept up a non-stop commentary on London past and present, interspersed with beguiling reminiscences of his own career in the detection of crime.

Brian had started out feeling worried and depressed, but he soon forgot his depression in lively interest and eventual amusement at this unusual—and unorthodox—commentator.

In the shining corridors of St. Monica's, Brian felt depression shutting down on him again: he hated the smell of hospital, the glimpse of ranks of beds and white faces, the trolleys which passed them on the way to the theatre.

Jenkins gripped the lad's arm firmly: "Appendicitis," he murmured. "Wonderful, isn't it. They do 'em in dozens, regiments of them, so to speak. Nobody had ever heard of it when I was a nipper. It was Edward VII started it, and it's just gone on. I often wonder if it's all my eye. To the right here—ah, good morning, Sister: does me good to see all you girls looking so fresh and bonny. How's our patient?"

"From our point of view, he's doing wonderfully," replied Sister, and

Jenkins said:

"That's fine. This is a friend of his, come all the way up from Devon: can he just have a peep?"

"Yes, of course. You know he's still unconscious, don't you?—and very quietly, please. You see, we still don't know much about unconsciousness, but we do believe that quietness is essential."

Brian stood and looked down at the bandaged head: with a stubble of reddish beard on the pallid chin, the lips relaxed, the nose pinched and jutting, it was difficult to recognise Dick. Then Brian saw his hands, and knew them at once: he had often noticed the contrast between Dick's long fingers and his own hamlike fists. He stood there wishing with all his heart he could convey his own thoughts to that silent, motionless form on the bed.

Then the sister touched his arm, and with downcast eyes Brian tiptoed back to the door, careful not to glance at the other beds. The door swung silently to behind them and Sister said:

"I know he looks terribly ill to you, hardly alive: but he's very much alive. When I take his pulse I marvel at the steadiness of it, the way his heart is going on doing its job, and his lungs as well. He hasn't had any of the troubles we often get with head injuries. His mind is asleep, but his body is busy with mending itself."

Brian brushed his hand across his eyes. "Thank you for saying that. It's so queer to see Dick like that: we're farmers, both of us, and he looks a real tough on a tractor."

"How nice to have a farmer here," she said. "He must be the first farmer I've ever had here."

Jenkins's low voice rumbled beside him: "Fine healthy lot, farmers. If I had my time over again I'd farm myself. Thank you kindly, Sister. God bless you."

They went down again to the busy entrance hall and Brian turned to Jenkins. "It's Dick, all right. No mistake about that, but . . . oh Lord . . ."

"Don't you go getting miserable," said Jenkins as they went back to the car. "He's alive—and you know the old adage. Now the next chap I'm asking you to have a look at isn't alive. He's on a mortuary slab. To the best of our belief he travelled in the same compartment as Greville did, from Reading to Paddington, and Greville spoke to him just as the train stopped. This chap was picked up on the line, having fallen out of a train. We want you to tell us if you've ever seen him before."

It was only a short distance between the hospital and the mortuary and

before they went in Jenkins put a firm hand on Brian's shoulder.

"You won't like what you're going to see: they've done their best to make the face presentable and recognisable, but the fact remains that what you're going to see is ugly—very ugly. If you feel upset about it, just remember what that hospital sister said about your mate—'His mind's asleep, but his body is busy mending itself.' "

Brian stood and looked down at the form on the slab, trying to control his own instinctive recoil—and fear. He knew he was afraid: this was the first time he had ever looked on a dead face, and this face had none of the peace and smiling dignity of death. But after the first moment of horror, Brian's mind accepted the thing as a thing, having no more connection with life than the dead beasts he had sometimes to deal with. He looked steadily, and then turned away.

"I can't tell you," he said. "I don't think I've ever seen him before, but I can't swear to it. Even if I had ever seen him alive, I couldn't tell now."

"That's all right. I didn't expect anything else, but there was just a chance," said Jenkins.

They went out again into the cold air, and Brian drew in a deep breath, thankful to be rid of the smell of the mortuary, at once antiseptic and tainted.

"Is there a madman around?" he asked Jenkins. "Some lunatic who's got a kink which makes him kill? That chap—and Dick—it's crazy."

"Depends on what you mean by crazy," replied Jenkins. "To our way of thinking there's method in the business—in both cases. Now I'm going to brief you for the next part of the job."

2

Macdonald drove Sally Dillon to Wimpole Street and during the drive he got her to talk about the journey up from Devon, in particular trying to find out if she had noticed anybody in the corridor when she had stood there smoking before the train ran into Paddington. Again what Sally remembered corroborated Weldon's impressions. There had been one heavy, middle-aged man who looked "dirty and shoddy." He had passed up and down the corridor more than once, but each time she had flattened herself against the window, and had not turned her head to look at him, but there had also been another man of similar age and build who looked "respectable": he also had passed her

more than once.

"How were they dressed?" asked Macdonald. The "dirty one," she thought, had worn a raincoat, soiled and nondescript, with a cap and muffler: the other a big topcoat, tweedy in quality and a felt hat—"a squashy hat," said Sally, "but I didn't really look at them," she added. "I know they were both large and I wished they'd go back to their places because corridors are narrow. They probably wished the same of me. Have you found out who the writing lady was—the large lady in the corner?"

"No. Not yet. She was noticed at Exeter Station, but she wasn't known there."

"I expect she gets so immersed in her writing that she's above reading newspapers or listening to the radio," said Sally. "I met a novelist in Devon once and she made an absolute cult of disregarding newspapers and wireless: she said she concentrated on her own work to the exclusion of all else."

"Did you ever read any of her books?" asked Macdonald.

"I tried—but they defeated me completely: they never got anywhere. I like a story to my novels—a beginning and a middle and an ending."

For the last few minutes of the drive she chattered on cheerfully and Macdonald was glad that she showed no tendency to "concentrate" exclusively on the story into whose midst she had been drawn by the chance choice of a seat in the train. When they arrived at Dr. Garstang's, Sally hurried off to deal with the neglected letters: Macdonald sat in the waiting room until Garstang had dismissed his patient, and then went to the consulting room, where he told Garstang the gist of the evidence obtained in Devon.

"It's an intensely interesting story, and a very unusual one," said Garstang. "I only hope I shall be able to see the boy if he recovers."

"Are you quite sure you haven't seen him?" asked Macdonald. "One of the more surprising facts that emerged eventually was that Greville had been given your name as a consulting psychiatrist and he intended to come to you."

Garstang sat very still, studying Macdonald with a steady, penetrating gaze, and it was some moments before he replied: "That's very remarkable," he said quietly. "Can you tell me any more about the circumstances in which he learnt my name?"

"Well, that seems to clear things up to some extent," said Garstang a few moments later. "Harvey, the M.O. of the X Group, R.A.C., is an old friend of mine. About six weeks ago he wrote to me saying that a lad he was interested in, a National Service man, might be coming to me for treatment. Here's his letter—he writes an abominable fist. The name he gives might be Greville—once you know the name you can make the letters out: if you didn't know the name his scrawl might convey anything."

Macdonald sat and studied the M.O.'s letter.

". . . He's a fine lad and a good soldier," wrote Harvey, "but there's obviously some psychological trouble. I had him in the sick bay to treat a damaged knee but I couldn't get him to talk. Another chap, who once lived in the same district, tells me that Greville lost his memory when he was a child—after results of the blitz Anyway, his particular pal came to me last night and asked if I could tell him of a psychologist—no explanation given for the request—but he didn't want a Service practitioner. So I think it's probable Greville will make an appointment with you when he's in England again after demob. I shall be interested to know what you make of him."

Garstang spoke again as Macdonald glanced up: "Harvey's a very good M.O. Conscientious and skilful, but his letters are always the same—garbled and muddled. I filed the letter in case the chap turned up, and then thought no more about it—but that's the explanation of Greville having been given my name. Harvey gave it to the other fellow—Salcombe."

Macdonald nodded. The explanation was simple enough, but the chief inspector was conscious of a sense of tension in Garstang's attitude: meeting that deliberately intent gaze, Macdonald found himself wondering if the psychologist were trying to read his mind—or trying to influence his mind: whatever it was, the result was curiously uncomfortable.

Almost as though he were aware of Macdonald's thoughts, Garstang went on: "I'd like to get this thing straight. I want to help you in this enquiry, and I can't if you don't trust me. May I tell you a bit about my own personal history? I think it will do something to explain why Harvey wanted that boy to consult me."

"By all means," agreed Macdonald.

"I was born in Germany in 1903," began Garstang. "My father was a German, my mother an Englishwoman. My father was a doctor of medicine, but he was also a student of the psychological methods developed in Vienna under Freud and Adler and Jung. He was a humane man and he had a horror

of war. When he realised in 1914 that war with England was inevitable, he persuaded my mother to go to America and to take me with her. He himself volunteered as an army doctor and was killed in 1915. My mother was unhappy in America and in 1919 contrived to get permission to come to England to live with her own people. The vessel we sailed on struck a mine in a storm and sank. My mother was drowned and I was saved. I arrived in England at the age of sixteen and lived with my mother's family in the north, eventually becoming a naturalised British subject and taking my mother's maiden name."

Garstang stopped here and looked at Macdonald with a half smile. "You may wonder why I have inflicted you with that history, but I think you will agree that it makes me a suitable practitioner to treat young Greville. You have told me about his experience in Germany, about his recognition of the language, his memory of a certain house in Cologne. I was born a German: as a child I lived in Cologne."

"Yes. I appreciate your point," replied Macdonald, and Garstang went on quickly:

"I knew you would, because you are a reasonable and highly intelligent man: but because detection is your business you are bound to suspect all contacts in your cases, much as a doctor must suspect contacts with infectious disease. I have told you what was the probable reason underlying Harvey's recommendation of myself as a psychiatrist, for I am pretty certain he had observed Greville much more closely than the latter realised. I have also told you that Greville has not consulted me. If you suggest I might have connected the boy whom Sarah Dillon described with the boy mentioned in Harvey's letter, I can only say that such a thing didn't occur to me. But apart from my own statements, isn't there any way of ridding your mind of a suspicion which can only be a hindrance to you?"

"By all means let us try to eliminate you in the same way I would try to eliminate any other contact—to use your own word, sir," said Macdonald. "Where were you on Monday evening?"

"I was in this house: I have a small flat on the top floor, and apart from going out to the post, I was upstairs all the while, until I came down here to my consulting room about half-past nine on Tuesday morning. I was alone, for I have no resident servant."

"Are there any other residents in this house?"

"Mr. and Mrs. Cox, who do the cleaning of the stairs and entrance hall, live

in the basement. Dr. Glynn and his wife live on the floor below mine. They were not in—they stayed the night with their married daughter in Putney on account of the fog. Pm afraid there's nobody to help to establish my presence here."

"Did anybody ring you up during the evening?"

"No. I have a telephone upstairs—a party line which I share with the Glynns—but the number is not in the telephone book.

I rang someone myself, but that was at seven o'clock, so it's of no relevance."

"And if I were to ask you where you were early yesterday morning, I suppose the answer would be the same," said Macdonald. "You were in your flat upstairs."

"No. You're wrong there," said Garstang. "I work indoors all day, so if I'm to get any exercise it has to be before the day's work begins or after it's over. Yesterday morning the fog had cleared: it seemed a major miracle after these last few days of Stygian gloom. I was out before seven o'clock and I walked up to Regent's Park and trotted three times round the Inner Circle, praising whatever gods there be for such symptoms of dawn as were vouchsafed to us. I daresay the milkman can corroborate my outgoing, the postman my return."

Macdonald listened to the easy voice with no consciousness of ease on his own part. Wimpole Street was five minutes from Baker Street Station, Baker Street five minutes from Paddington, and Westbourne Park a few minutes beyond Paddington.

Still in the same easy, non-committal voice Macdonald asked: "Can you tell me where you were in the spring of 1941?" Garstang stared back at him and made no haste to reply: the faintest smile curved his mobile lips. At last he said: "Are you depending on a time reaction? We don't find it very reliable unless the free-association business is developed very skilfully first. I admit your question surprised me, but I can see the connection. In March 1941 I was in Dijon—of all places in the world in that year of grace."

A half smile lightened his sombre eyes. "I am not expecting you to take my word for it—though there's no proof obtainable—but you might get them to disinter some of the records in M.I.5, if they still exist. I told you I was born in Germany: in the summer of 1939 I went to Vienna, to a professional congress, and thence on to Munich and Berlin. I contrived to stay in Germany, by means which I need not elaborate, until the autumn of 1940. I got some messages through to London—whose value was less great than I believed at

the time. From September 1940 until July 1941 I was occupied in a very slow, very tedious journey, through Belgium and France and Spain. I eventually reached Bristol on July fourteenth . . . Quatorze Juillet, 1941. I then reported to London, to the gentleman who had originally suggested that I might be very helpful if I would co-operate with some of his agents inside Germany." Again Garstang smiled. "It may have occurred to you that I look older than my years warrant: I take it that I'm younger than you are, but I don't look it. That was a very ageing journey and I'm afraid it was quite futile so far as the authorities here were concerned—but we all took ourselves very seriously at the time. If you ask me to prove precisely where I was in the spring of 1941, I can only tell you that it's beyond my powers. Most of those who befriended me—and many other better men than me—are dead." Again he fell silent for a moment and then added, quite cheerfully, "I'm afraid from your point of view it's all rather a mess. I don't know exactly what's in your mind, but from the trend of your questions I can guess to some extent."

Macdonald laughed. "Then we're both in the same boat," he replied. "You said a short while ago that your job and mine have something in common: we both go trawling for our livings. We both ask questions and assess the answers in the light of our training and experience. You say you want to help in this enquiry and it's plain that you're well qualified to help. I suggest that you talk to Brian Salcombe, getting such information from him as you judge should help you to understand what state of mind Greville was in—and that I listen to both questions and answers."

Garstang chuckled. "I like that," he said. "It's very astute, and it's a sort of inversion of my usual practice. I usually assess the answers: you, in your turn, are going to assess the questions I ask. I have a feeling that if I were the criminal I should be in for a tricky spell."

"But you agree to the suggestion?"

"Certainly I do: and if I succeed in evoking any information you haven't already acquired, I hope you'll give me due credit."

4

When Jenkins and Brian Salcombe left the mortuary, they drove out of the borough of Paddington into the borough of St. Marylebone.

"I always say the air feels different the minute you're across Edgware Road,"

chuckled Jenkins, "but then I'm a Marylebone man myself: born in the High Street—my dad had a grocer's shop. Marylebone's my village, and we never had much opinion of Paddington. We'll drive round Regent's Park, round the Outer Circle—you'll soon see what I mean."

As they drove in that pleasant roadway between the newly painted Regency mansions and the lake where ducks were being fed by youthful Londoners, Jenkins "briefed" Brian for his next job—that of talking to Dr. Garstang. As though with a policeman's sense of appropriate timing, Jenkins had Brian on the doorstep of 500 Wimpole Street at the very moment that Macdonald wanted him. It was all as neat as a conjuring trick, and Garstang seemed to realise it.

"Dramatic fitness—or routine?" he enquired somewhat sardonically.

"You might call it guesswork," rejoined Macdonald. "Since you have been good enough to put off some of your patients and give us your valuable time, I'm glad the guess was a good one, for no time will be wasted."

They sat down in Garstang's consulting room, the four of them: Jenkins, an unobtrusive amanuensis, sitting out of sight by the door: Macdonald near the window, Brian facing Garstang across the table. Listening for undercurrents, Macdonald was aware that the young farmer was distrustful of Garstang and prepared to dislike him, but so skilful was the psychologist's manner of approach, so even and kindly and understanding, that Brian's abruptness and slight aggressiveness faded out, to be replaced b,y a genuine effort to answer the questions put to him and to answer them fairly and fully. The two voices went on: Garstang's deep, quiet, and gentle: Brian's so much younger, so much less under control, anxious, and insistent.

Macdonald did not learn anything new from the first stages of the enquiry: indeed, the story as elicited by Garstang's questions lacked the intense vividness of Mrs. Greville's narrative, and Macdonald's mind carried two parallel versions, so that some of the old lady's phrases returned to him in a visual awareness.

. . He put him over his shoulder as he would have a sick lamb and brought him to me, and I fed him like a baby. . . ." It was later in the interview that Macdonald had no time for his own thoughts: Garstang was asking about the house Richard Greville had remembered in Cologne.

"You were on a road running south from the city, in the direction of Bonn? . . . You passed the remains of a modern church close to a civic building like a town hall, for instance, with pointed windows and a lot of elaborate carving,

and reached a crossroads? . . . The lane was on the right, just beyond the crossroads, and the house had three gables, rather tall and narrow, and they were roofed with rather elaborate tiles?"

'That's right," said Brian.

"And was there a wistaria growing up the house?"

"Wistaria . . . oh, a creeper, you mean . . . a thing with mauve flowers . . . Yes. There was. Why, do you know the house?"

"I knew it once. The pastor's name was Baumgarten: he had lived there for years. He kept a small school for about half a dozen little boys, and his wife boarded some of them."

"A school," exclaimed Brian. "Then Dick must have been at school there—but why didn't he remember? If he remembered the house, he must have remembered being there."

"Not if he didn't want to," said Garstang quietly.

"But I tell you he did want to," cried Brian.

"You've got to realise that we have 'wants' on different levels," replied the other. "A whole lot of our behaviour is conditioned by wants, needs, desires—and fears as well—that never emerge into our conscious minds at all. The simplest way of understanding it is by admitting that we don't forget to do the things we like doing, but we do genuinely forget things that bore and irritate and worry us, whether it's paying bills, taking medicine, or writing duty letters. But let us leave the explanations until later, and get back to those last few weeks when you were in Germany. Did you and Greville invariably spend your free time together?"

"No, of course not. We didn't always have the same duties, so we weren't always free together, and anyway towards the end of the time Dick went broody. He didn't want to go out: it was as though he were afraid to go out. That's when I began to realise something had got to be done about it. Things were getting him down." Brian suddenly thumped the table with his fists. "I wish I'd never done it, never interfered. If Dick had come on to the farm with me right away and cut out all the college business he'd have been all right. He suggested that, but I said no. I told him to come and see you and then go on to Reading. If it hadn't been for what I said this would never have happened."

"Something would have happened, and that something might have been worse," said Garstang. "The strain on his mind might have led to more hideous disaster than you realise. You've nothing to blame yourself for—far from it. Now you were demobbed together and you went back to Devon

together?"

"Yes. Dick went home to Moorcock and I got busy at Long Barrow."

"Did Greville stay at his home the whole six weeks between demob and his journey to London last Monday?"

"All but a few days. He went to see his uncle in Wales: he borrowed my motor bike and had the heck of a time with it. Everything went wrong that could."

Garstang sat in silence for a moment, then he asked, "Are you quite sure he went to Wales?"

"Yes. He told me so." Brian's chin went up and his eyes met Garstang's angrily. "Dick's never told me any lies—or anyone else, either," he added.

"All right," said Garstang. "Don't get in a bate about it. But remember this: You could see for yourself that he wasn't normal; I know much better than you do that he was living under an intolerable strain, and it's quite possible that his whole character might have been affected by that strain."

Brian looked at him angrily. "You're trying to twist things to suit your own theories," he protested. "It may be all very clever and very scientific—but I know Dick."

"Nobody knows anybody," said Garstang quietly. "All you know is what they want you to know . . . want with their conscious minds, that is."

He got up, adding, "Thank you very much. You've been very patient and very helpful."

"Thank you for nothing," retorted Brian unreasonably.

CHAPTER TWELVE

"WE ROOT OUT some funny stories, one way and another," said Reeves to Macdonald. "This yarn of yours about Garstang intrigues me quite a lot: one of the underground boys in wartime Germany . . . and I wonder how much M.I.5 really knew about his mental processes. He was born in Germany—what's bred in the bone . . he ended in characteristically cryptic fashion.

"We seem to be collecting the usual series of variations and either-ors," commented Macdonald. "Eve got a report from Fordworthy, who's been checking up on Walter Burrow—Margie's husband. He was away from home for three days altogether—Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Rumour has it that his wife's absence at Moorcock was not unacceptable to Wally Burrow, and that he sought consolation with an old love. Which may be in character and yet remote from fact. But he's sitting tight and saying nothing."

"Could be . . ." murmured Reeves, "but I don't see a farmer like Wally Burrow being snappy enough to use a London particular to such advantage: I reckon the chap who did it was a quick thinker."

"What's bred in the bone?" enquired Macdonald. "We're getting incoherent, Reeves. Let's get back to plain evidence again."

The two C.I.D. men were having lunch in their own canteen: the advantage of eating there lay in the fact that they could be as incoherent as they liked, or the reverse. Nobody noticed what they said: there were too many odd conversations going on.

"Evidence," echoed Reeves. "Take yours first. You let Garstang do the steering and the direction he steered in was what interests me. Accent on mental strain, tension, unpredictability: he opened up avenues leading to grim possibilities. He found a loophole in the timetable, so to speak, and stressed that anything might have happened while young Greville was supposed to be in Wales."

"So it might—but we'll get that one tidied up pretty soon," said Macdonald.

"I'm not quite happy about this Dillon girl, Reeves. I wanted to keep her out of it, but she's very much in it. If she'd only remembered to tell me about that book to begin with it would have saved a lot of trouble."

"She was thinking about the boy, so she forgot about the book," mused Reeves.

"There you go again: the psychological approach—pure Garstang," said Macdonald.

"I call it common sense and no fancy names," said Reeves. "What are you thinking of trying out on Garstang next, Jock? I know you've got something along that line. You can't keep him out of it."

"I don't want to keep him out of it," said Macdonald. "He's more useful in it. The next move is to get Sarah Dillon and Weldon to compare notes on the men they saw in the corridor of the train. The evidence they've given so far tallies: if they talk it over together they may produce something more definite which may connect up with your line of research. And since Garstang regards himself as responsible for Miss Dillon, I think it's indicated that Garstang should be present at this consultation. So we are holding it at Garstang's consulting room."

Reeves sat and frowned. "Well—it's your technique, not mine. There may be something in it: but for the love of Mike don't get too much involved in the psychological approach or you'll leave me standing."

"That's an unjustifiable aspersion, Pete," retorted Macdonald. "If ever there was a chap who kept both feet on the ground, it's me. But I've always found it worth while to let people do their stuff in their own way: give 'em a feeling of confidence and they often slip up. Now let's have your findings."

"My findings," echoed Reeves. "In my experience crime grows and fattens on the sordid—and my lot's plain sordid. Bert Lewis: a nasty bit of work if ever there was one, but everybody's loved by someone. These flash boys have always got a girl. I found the girl: name of Mae Rosing. Hot jazz and painted like a houri: eighteen at the most and somebody's dream of Arabian nights—but not mine. She's mad that her boy friend's done in, out for blood, and what she won't tell's nobody's business."

"I've often had reason to be grateful to you," murmured Macdonald, "but most of all on occasions like this. You can tackle the Mae Rosings in a way I can't."

"I know the patter," said Reeves. "If the old man had heard some of my language he'd have straight unfrocked me, as Elizabeth I said to the bishop.

We won't have any verbatims, but most of it clicks. Lewis was on that train. He was in with a dog syndicate in Reading, and he was broke—lost his own brass and Mae's too—we were right there. Barney O'Flynn was on the train as well, and they were both at the Whistling Pig on Tuesday night. Barney spotted that Lewis knew something about what happened at Paddington—and let him see it. Mae Rosing knew that. She wouldn't admit that Lewis had anything to do with Barney's accident. Oh no. She told me a fine tale about how the boys were out to down Bert Lewis because he'd defaulted on them—but I didn't swallow that little lot. All too complicated. As I see it, this is what happened. Henry Brown was in the pub, and Henry heard the word Paddington mentioned. He'd have been on to that like knife, and if he'd a ha'p'orth of common sense he'd have gone straight to his sergeant and told him about it. He didn't—he trailed Lewis and O'Flynn and got coshed for his pains, poor silly juggins. That'll larn him: we try hard enough to teach these young hopefuls not to go playing by themselves, but they will do it."

"Their private Everests," said Macdonald.

Reeves chuckled. "That's about it. Excelsior, as we learnt at school. Well, where were we? Henry interfered and got his: but Barney O'Flynn knew enough to get Lewis pulled in, and Lewis meant to cash in privately on what he'd seen and no sharing. I reckon that was it. Knock Barney out and leave him where he'd be an obstruction when the lorry came to park as per usual."

"As per usual," murmured Macdonald, "or do we see daylight? It's odd how often I get an idea when I listen to you babbling on, Reeves. You go your way and I go mine, and then something emerges which we might have recognised earlier on—but didn't."

"Recognised is the operative word in this schemozzle," said Reeves, "but though we may see sense, we've got a long way to go yet. All the same, the thing that's suddenly struck both of us *is* sense—common sense—and none of your psychic bids. But there's a lot of cluttering up. You remember I told you that Lewis had got a threatening letter in his pocket? 'Keep out, damn you, or it's coming to you. You know why.' Short and sweet. It's written in a back-sloping hand, and looks as though the writer didn't know much about the business end of a pen. Left-handed, the writing wallahs say. I showed it to the Rosing girl, and she swore she recognised the handwriting—said it come from another of the Reading boys who'd done Bert Lewis out of his rake-off. And maybe the girl's telling the truth. Not that truthtelling's a habit of hers, but she's so het up she'd split on anybody. So that's another bit to tidy up."

"Fingerprints?" queried Macdonald.

"Lewis's—all over it. No others. No envelope."

"Well—I leave that one to you," said Macdonald. "If my idea's got any substance, there's enough work to keep the whole department busy."

Reeves nodded. "Unless it short-circuits. There's one thing which you haven't got yet—the other passenger."

"The writing lady," said Macdonald. "The Exeter chaps are doing their best, but it's what you might call a wide field. All they have arrived at yet is the fact that she didn't arrive at the station by any of the Exeter taxis. I've put out enquiries among the bookish folk—literary agents, clubs, and so forth—but we're only guessing when we assume she's a writer. It occurred to me she might have been an inspector and was writing her report while things were fresh in her mind."

Reeves grunted. "It's an idea—but doesn't she read the papers or listen in? You've had reports enough from other people on the train—all quite useless, I know, but this dame seems to have done a vanishing trick."

Macdonald nodded. "Yes. Field has interrogated over twenty people who arrived on that train. They all made for the tube, incidentally. The fog was so thick that it was obvious no taxis would be moving, so there was a stream of people walking across to the Bakerloo and Metropolitan. They would all have been worried and anxious and not likely to notice other people. She didn't go to the hotel, she wasn't noticed on the underground stations, and she certainly didn't leave by car. She could have walked—anyone who really knew their way might have decided to walk—and no one would have noticed her."

"She wouldn't have walked unless she lived fairly close to Paddington," mused Reeves, "and the local chaps will have been doing their stuff on their own beats. Makes one wonder a bit. We want her. She was in that compartment all the time. The Dillon girl wasn't—and Weldon went to sleep."

"I'll have to issue a description," said Macdonald, "and we shall be overwhelmed with reports of large ladies in navy-blue coats. If there's one thing that's more heartbreaking than another it's following up sundry persons who prove to have not the remotest resemblance to the party described."

"You're telling me . . ." said Reeves.

It was at half-past five that another "consultation" was held in Dr. Garstang's consulting room. This time it was Macdonald who sat in the consultant's chair, behind the table: Sally Dillon and William Weldon sat opposite him. Garstang sat in the window seat, Brian Salcombe by the fire, and the industrious Jenkins by the door. Sally was called in immediately Weldon arrived, and the two looked at each other, face to face. Weldon smiled—he'd got a pleasant smile.

"Yes. This is the young lady who was in a corner seat of the compartment I travelled in from Reading on Monday evening. I've told you I was half asleep, Chief Inspector, but I remember her, all right."

"And I remember you, though you were half asleep," said Sally.

Weldon looked round the room at the others, first at Salcombe. "No. Never seen you in my life." Then at Jenkins. "Well . . . I'm not so sure. I don't know your face, but there's something about the cut of your jib reminds me of one of the blokes in the corridor of that train."

"Well, that might be helpful, though this is one of my own colleagues," rejoined Macdonald. "Inspector Jenkins: Mr. Weldon."

Weldon laughed. "So much for my powers of observation. Discredited in one."

"No, you're not, because I know what you mean," said Sally. "The one I call the respectable man did look a bit like Inspector Jenkins. He was substantial—I don't mean that rudely—and his coat was rather like that one, and he'd got a face which was good-tempered and pleased with itself—except that we all looked dirty and disgruntled that night because of the fog."

Macdonald turned to Salcombe. "Did Inspector Jenkins remind you of anybody you know?" he asked.

"Only that if he were a bit more weather-beaten and wearing gaiters and breeches and a tweed coat, he'd pass as a farmer in any cattle market anywhere," rejoined Brian unexpectedly.

Weldon was looking at Garstang. "Have we met before . . . or not?" he enquired uncertainly.

"Not to my knowledge," rejoined Garstang.

"Oh well—I'd better keep quiet. Remembering faces doesn't seem to be my long suit," said Weldon.

They all sat down, Macdonald indicating their places, and the latter said: "I've asked you all to come here to see if we can arrive at anything more precise about the movements of people observed in the train. I think I'd better

tell you what's befallen some of them, but first, let's run through a few facts about identifications. Salcombe has identified Richard Greville, who was knocked out shortly after leaving the train. Mr. Weldon has also seen Greville and is satisfied that he is the lad who was in the train with Miss Dillon and the 'writing lady.' Miss Dillon has identified Mr. Weldon—and vice versa. Mr. Weldon has been to the mortuary and is of opinion that the dead man he saw there—Bert Lewis—was the fifth occupant of the compartment Greville and Miss Dillon travelled in."

"I'd put it more strongly than that, Chief Inspector," said Weldon. "I couldn't recognise his face, but I'm sure of his hands. He'd got curious hands, white and puffy. You see, I expected those hands to investigate my pockets, and I kept my eyes on them for a minute or two. And I recognised his clothes."

"Then we'll accept that, for Bert Lewis was known to have been on the train. Finally, I have a photograph. Miss Dillon, will you look at it first, please?"

Sally took the photograph: her face was paler than usual and very serious, but she had herself well in hand.

"It's so difficult to say if I recognise this," she said. "It's not like . . . a real person. It might be one of the men I saw in the corridor, but I don't know. I'm sorry, I just don't know."

"All right, Miss Dillon: don't worry about it," said Macdonald. "You've given a sensible answer. 'It might be' was all I wanted. Now, Mr. Weldon."

Weldon put on his glasses, held the photograph in the beam of the desk lamp, and studied it intently. "I think it is the man in the corridor—the one who made signs to Lewis," he said. "I saw his face, because he was peering through the window: it was a heavily jowled face, like this one, and I remember now the nose was crooked—broken, I suppose. I wouldn't swear to it, but I believe I'm right."

"Thanks," said Macdonald. "It seems probable enough that you are, because this man was known to Lewis—and this man's body was found in a mews between Westbourne Park and Paddington on Tuesday night. He'd been run over by a lorry. Lewis was found on the permanent way, also between Paddington and Westbourne Park, on Wednesday morning, having presumably fallen out of a train."

"Well, it's the sort of story which ordinary decent folk don't often happen across—and thank God they don't," said Weldon, "but given the type of characters you've got in Lewis and this chap, it's not so very surprising that

the other young fellow—Greville—got knocked over the head. These two who are dead can't be counted as a great loss——"

"But why should Greville have been attacked?" burst out Salcombe. "That's what doesn't make sense to me."

"Where do you come in in all this?" asked Weldon. "Were you on that train too?"

"No . . . I wasn't. Greville's my friend."

"Well, I can only tell you that your friend got talking to this chap, Lewis. My own impression was that he recognised Lewis as a fellow he'd known in the Army, That's only a guess, because I didn't really take in what was said. Lewis didn't answer, but just as we were all getting out at Paddington, Greville spoke to Lewis again and went up the platform with him." Weldon turned to Sally. "Is that your recollection too?"

"Yes, I think so," she said. "I didn't see Richard Greville speak to Lewis the first time, because I was in the corridor, but he did say something while you were getting out. It was something like: 'Aren't you . . . ?' as though he were asking a question."

"Did you see them go up the platform together?" asked Weldon.

"No. I was the last to get out. You remember the writing lady got out first, then Lewis and you, then Richard Greville. By the time I'd collected my things and got out I couldn't see any of you. The fog was so thick everybody vanished when they were only a few steps away."

"Perfectly true," agreed Weldon. "As you say, the other ladv got out first: then myself—I was in the corner seat and managed to prevent Lewis pushing past me, which he tried to do. As I got out, I stood still on the platform for a moment, getting my bearings. Lewis and Greville passed me, and the fat chap whose photograph we've just seen caught them up and the three of them disappeared into the fog together." He turned to Macdonald. "Have you traced the other lady—the tall, stout one with the brief case?"

"No," replied Macdonald. "A number of people who travelled on your train have reported to us, but none of them noticed her."

"Doesn't that seem a bit queer?" asked Weldon. "The press has given plenty of prominence to your requests for information: you'd think she'd have got in touch with you."

"There are plenty of possible explanations," said Macdonald. "The reason why she was not noted on the platform is fairly simple: your coach was just behind the restaurant car, the latter, of course, being empty. That means that

nobody alighted on the platform for the whole length of the restaurant car. The two front coaches of the train were occupied by naval ratings on leave. The writing lady seems to have been in a hurry, according to your accounts. She plunged up the platform and disappeared into the fog as she passed the empty restaurant car."

"That's a perfectly reasonable explanation," agreed Weldon, and Macdonald went on:

"We've been trying to find out if she was noticed on either of the underground stations: the fog had got into the tube enough to blur things a bit, I'm told, but it was easy enough to see along the platforms. Miss Dillon—you went home by tube, didn't you?"

"Yes. I went to Maida Vale Station. A train came in just as I got off the escalator at Paddington and I had only to run a few steps on to the platform and got straight on to the train. I didn't notice anybody—certainly not the writing lady."

"And you, sir?" enquired Macdonald, turning to Weldon.

"I travelled in the opposite direction to Miss Dillon—south, to Oxford Circus. I think a train went out just before I got on to the platform: anyway, I seemed to wait for the deuce of a time for a train, and I wasn't in a mood to notice anybody or anything. I was dog-tired and fed up, and I stood in what you might call a semi-trance, cursing myself for being fool enough to live in such a climate as this one."

Garstang asked a question for the first time since the interview had started. "Does that imply that you haven't always lived in England, Mr. Weldon?"

"I certainly haven't. I was born in South Africa. My father was a civil engineer and most of his jobs were done overseas. If we get any more winters like this one, I shall pack up and go back where I was born. South Africa may have some drawbacks, but fog isn't among them." He turned back to Macdonald. "Any more questions, Chief Inspector? I don't want to inconvenience you by hurrying off, but I've got to dine out, and polish a lot of work off in the course of the evening."

"The only other point is about the second man in the corridor, mentioned by both you and Miss Dillon," said Macdonald.

"Yes. The chap who had some resemblance to Inspector Jenkins," said Weldon. "I noticed him pass down the corridor once, and I noticed him again when I got out of the train. Greville, Lewis, and the chap whose photograph you showed us, went up the platform together. This other chap stood beside

me for a moment as though he were a bit flummoxed. I was feeling the same way myself. Then we both moved on and I can't remember another thing about him."

Macdonald turned to Sally, but she shook her head. "I'm sorry, but I can't say a thing which will help. I've told you about the people who were in our compartment, and you've got them sorted out—all except the writing lady. When I was in the corridor two men pushed past me once or twice, but I remember very little about them except that one of them was dirty and rather objectionable, and the other wasn't unpleasant. As for when I got out on the platform, I didn't notice a thing. I knew there were other people milling round me, but even if I'd seen somebody I know I shouldn't have recognised them." Her voice sounded as though tears weren't very far away, and she spoke to Macdonald almost appealingly. "You see, the fog was thick enough to be frightening. It was hellish. I knew it was silly to be frightened, because I'd only got to walk straight on across the space beyond the platforms to the tube entrance, and I've done that dozens of times and I know it perfectly well—and I'd only got five minutes' walk when I got out of the tube. But all the same, it was beastly, and I didn't think of anything else at all but getting home just as soon as I could get home."

"Which was quite the most sensible thing you could have thought about," said Macdonald. "You've helped us a lot, Miss Dillon, and I'm very grateful to you."

He got up, adding: "Then I won't keep you any longer, Mr. Weldon, and thank you for your co-operation."

"I'm only too glad to help," rejoined Weldon. "It looks to me as though you've got the job taped, except for a few details, of which the 'writing lady' seems to be one—though I doubt if she'd tell you much more than Miss Dillon and I have told you. So I'll say good evening." He bowed to them all, a natural, easy gesture: his eyes rested on Garstang for a moment, and then he went to the door.

Sally got up and moved over to Brian Salcombe, who jumped to his feet. "I'm so sorry about Richard," she said impulsively. "He told me his name was Richard when we were in the train, so it seems natural to call him that. It was such a horrible thing to happen, and I do hope he'll get quite better. I liked him so much."

She spoke with simple sincerity and Brian flushed a little as he shook hands with her. "It was nice of you to say that," he said slowly, "but didn't he tell you

a single thing about what he was going to do in London, or who he expected to see?"

"Not a thing," said Sally. "I could tell he was worried and unhappy, and I did have the feeling all the time he wanted to tell me something and couldn't get it out."

"I know . . . he's been like that," said Brian, "but did he really speak to that Lewis chap?"

"Yes, just as they got out," replied Sally. "Richard almost jumped to the door, as though he were afraid the others would get out before he could speak to them. He didn't even say good-bye to me, although we'd talked quite a lot on the journey. It was as though he'd forgotten I existed."

"I can't make that out," said Brian. "It's all so unlike him."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MACDONALD was joined by reeves, and they drove back to Scotland Yard together after what Reeves called "the omnibus consultation." Jenkins, with kindly, old-fashioned courtesy, had asked Sally if he might have "the honour of driving her home," and she had gone off in Jenkins's car with Brian Salcombe in the back. Reeves had been much pleased with this arrangement.

"Nice kids, both of them," he said to Macdonald. "It will do them good to chat away without all you solemn-faced blokes doing the heavy-handed. It doesn't seem fair to show pictures of stiffs to a bit of a girl like that."

"No, it doesn't—but the young of today have marvellous resilience," said Macdonald. "Sally Dillon was nearly in tears just now, but what d'you bet me she'll ask Brian Salcombe in for a drink when she gets home and open a tin for supper after that?"

"Of course she will," agreed Reeves, "and for all you know they'll think up something useful between them over the imported ham or what-have-you. From what you've told me I'd say Sally Dillon's a pretty bright child. What was it that Garstang was asking you just before you left?"

"He wants to go to Cologne and try to find out if Richard Greville was there as a child and who his people were," said Macdonald.

Reeves gave a long whistle. "Well . . . he's an optimist—you're not risking it, are you?"

"No, I'm not," replied Macdonald, "not at this stage, anyhow. But it's a job that's got to be tackled. I think one of the M.I.5. chaps could follow that one up—they've got several fellows who not only speak German like their mother tongue, but who've got the topography and one-time residents of Cologne pretty well taped. They had to have, when they sorted out the war-crime fugitives."

"Get James to take it on. It'll be a nice change for him: he's fed to the back of his uppers with his 1941 Yank. And James could go a bit further in checking

the dope on Garstang, both from their own records and reports inside Germany. Rather him than me: I believe their records compare favourably with the British Museum Library so far as volume's concerned."

"I wish I could do it myself. I haven't been to Germany since pre-Hitler," said Macdonald, "but I've forgotten all the German I ever knew—which was never very much."

Reeves fell silent for a while, until Macdonald turned his car into the Yard gates in Cannon Row.

"D'you reckon the German angle's at the bottom of the doings, Jock?"

"I've got a hunch that way, but there isn't a spot of evidence to back it."

"Oh yes, there is," argued Reeves. "There's Garstang. He says he wants to go to Germany."

"Yes, there's Garstang, and your types who frequented the Whistling Pig and are now decorating mortuary slabs, and there's Wally Burrow, who's got quite a substantial motive. There's over a thousand sheep on the Moorcock grazing land, as well as the farm. I'm expecting another report from Fordworthy. He's full of zeal."

"I see the motive, all right . . . but how does Wally Burrow link up with Lewis . . . or does Wally patronise the dogs?" mused Reeves. "I know these dog-racing types get around, but Plymouth's a bit off the beat."

"As you say," agreed Macdonald, "but we've got to get Wally Burrow sorted out to one side or the other."

2

Macdonald went up to his own office: he found, as he rather expected to find, another report from the zealous Fordworthy, labelled "Urgent." It had been brought up from Plymouth by the guard on the Cornish Riviera Express and delivered to Scotland Yard by the Paddington police. Macdonald had just finished reading it when Jenkins came in.

"I left the boy with Miss Dillon," he said. "They wanted to talk things over between themselves, and I didn't see any objection."

"Nor anybody else, either," said Macdonald. "Do you think Salcombe will find his own way back to my flat without getting lost in London?"

"Oh yes. I told him very carefully, and he's a sensible chap."

"The Misses Dillon and Maine will have to do their own housework until

they find another charlady," said Macdonald. "Their fair Rosa was just an unreliable lazy hussy who took the money for two hours' work which she skipped through in twenty minutes or so. Nothing much else against her, except a partiality for entertaining tradesmen and meter-reading operatives in the kitchenette."

"Poor young ladies," said the kindhearted Jenkins. "I might help them there, perhaps."

"With the housework?" enquired Macdonald.

"No. By recommending an honest char," said Jenkins. "I know a lot of chars."

"Don't mention it outside these walls, then," said Macdonald, "or we shall be haunted by hopeful housewives. Here's Reeves. The worst has happened, Pete. Wally Burrow was on that train. So this is where we think again."

"Then I'll leave you to it," said Jenkins. "I like thinking, but you two chaps are too mobile for me—too much like performing fleas, if I may say so without offence. I'll go and do a quick think by myself."

"Did he own up?" asked Reeves promptly as Jenkins closed the door.

"No," said Macdonald, "assuming it's Burrow you mean. He was seen boarding the train at Exeter. The story of Richard Greville's accident has got around, and Burrow's not very popular in his own district. It doesn't look too good, in Fordworthy's opinion. Burrow drove from Plymouth to Exeter, garaged his car there, and came to London by train, knowing that Greville was travelling by it."

"How much of the doings could he have been responsible for?" asked Reeves promptly.

"You can answer that one as well as I can," rejoined Macdonald.

"I said I couldn't see a farmer like Burrow being quick enough to take advantage of a London particular, but perhaps I was wrong," said Reeves slowly. "I should have said an average Devon farmer. Most of them don't take jaunts up to London. Did he give any reason for his journey, Jock?"

"Yes. He wanted to see the Fat stock show. You can't get past that one."

"Yes . . . cattle dying from the fog . . . they got in the headlines, poor beasts. Well, here goes. Burrow came to London to see the Fat stock show, and he chose the train Greville travelled by, but was careful not to board it in Plymouth, where he was known. Arrived at Paddington, he followed Greville up the platform and out into the station approach."

"Steady on a minute here," said Macdonald. "Are you postulating that

Greville had joined forces with Lewis, or any of the other charmers we've been hearing about?"

"Well, it's guesswork, because we're as much in a fog as they were," said Reeves. "What I'm doing is to make out a case which fits Burrow: so I'll say that Greville and Lewis walked up the platform together as far as the barrier, and then Greville branched off towards the booking hall and the carriageway, with Burrow just behind him. Lewis followed, having had an afterthought: 'This chap's a sucker anyway: I might get a quid or so off him with luck.' And Barney O'Flynn followed Lewis on principle, because he was inquisitive about Greville's interest in Lewis. When Greville and Burrow got outside the booking hall, where there were some people and light of a sort, into the carriageway, which was pitch black, Burrow suddenly thought: 'Well, here's my chance—I shall never have a better one.' He drew up level with Greville and hit him. Farmers may not be scientific hitters, but there's beef in their fists. Greville went down, knocked flat out on the pavement—and knocked that iron bar over as he fell. Burrow would have stood and waited, to see if anybody had noticed the row. They didn't—we know that—except Lewis. Lewis was pretty close to them. When nobody came along to ask what it was all about, Burrow decided to empty Greville's pockets and take his haversack: while this was being done, Lewis squirmed under the trolley." Reeves broke off. "Anything impossible in that lot?"

"No. I should say it's pretty close to probabilities," said Macdonald, "but you haven't reached the snags yet."

"I know that—but I don't think there are any unsurmountable snags, not if Lewis is taken into consideration. You see, I'm arguing Lewis followed Burrow—after Wally's done his damned dirtiest with the iron bar. Lewis knew he was on to quite a thing, if he played his hand right."

"If you're going to tell me Lewis approached Burrow and said: 'Five hundred by tomorrow,' to quote his famous last words, can you tell me why Burrow didn't put Lewis where he belonged?" asked Macdonald. "After all, the fog was still doing its foul best, and the beef was still in the farmer's fists."

"No snag there," said Reeves promptly. "Lewis would have known all about keeping out of reach—and he'd have chosen his moment, outside a pub, or within earshot of a copper. He'd only to say: 'All right guv'ner. If you won't play ball, I'll shout for a rozzer, and you can explain to him how you never done it. You got his bits and pieces on you.' Come to think of it, Lewis had every ace in the pack to Burrow's deuce."

Macdonald nodded. "That's perfectly true. If Lewis *did* follow the would-be murderer immediately after the thing happened, then Lewis held every ace, but we don't know that Lewis did follow immediately. There were those two boys who ran away when Buller saw them: if Lewis heard footsteps approaching, he'd have stayed under his trolley, pro tem. But leave that for the moment, and get on with your own reconstruction. We've only had Act I so far."

"Act II," murmured Reeves, "played out in some pub or dive where Lewis wasn't known. It's a rum thought: at one moment Lewis held all the cards, but the minute he tried to turn things to his own profit he lost that advantage. He became vulnerable."

Again Macdonald nodded: he was getting more and more interested in Reeves's argument. "Hostages to fortune," mused Macdonald. "Lewis knew that if he were caught out in what he was doing he would share the penalty rather than the profits."

"That's it," said Reeves. "Lewis had brains, of a sort. He couldn't control the laws of chance and he couldn't make a dud dog win a race, but he was cunning, all right. Once he'd decided to play his hand for profit, he was in it with the other, tarred with the same brush, and it was to his interest that the other bloke didn't get caught. He'd've said: 'We better think this out, chum,' and it was Lewis's thinking which made things happen. 'Things' including Henry Brown's headache, Barney O'Flynn's unfortunate accident, and the disappearance of Miss Dillon's book."

"I wondered how you were going to fit that in," said Macdonald.

Reeves lit a cigarette, reflectively. "You started me on this," he said. "I've been thinking a lot about Lewis. I said he'd got brains—of a sort. So he had, but they didn't go far enough. His brains were slick, but not thorough. He could think fast, but not ahead. That's why he is where he is. If he'd been thorough and capable of thinking ahead, he'd have known that it was better to lie doggo and take a chance than to get busy organising accidents. Come to think of it, I expect he got jittered over the O'Flynn business. He knew it was a bit near home. So he tried to cash in quickly so that he'd got the dough to beat it, go underground-fresh fields and pastures new."

"Yes, I think that explains why Lewis got caught outsaid Macdonald, and Reeves nodded.

"That's how I see it. Lewis panicked. He'd been too clever and done too much too quickly. He thought he'd better raise what he could as fast as he

could and go to earth. If he'd been offered fifty quid on account I reckon he'd've jumped at it—and a slow train on a foggy morning's not a bad place to have a confidential chat."

Macdonald agreed. "I think that's quite a point, Pete. Come to think of it, between eight and nine in the morning isn't the sort of time a chap like Lewis usually does business. No pubs open, no cafes or eating houses of Lewis's sort; and he wouldn't have wanted to do business in the street. I'd been puzzling a bit as to whether Lewis would have risked getting into an empty compartment with a chap who'd every reason for wishing him dead, but if Lewis was in a panic and out to get the money quickly, he might have risked it."

"Especially in a stopping train," said Reeves. "Those slow trains out of Paddington stop every few minutes—Royal Oak, Westbourne Park, Acton—he'd have calculated that nobody'd risk a schemozzle when the train was stopping so often, and maybe he forgot that there was still enough fog to make the train take double the usual time between halts. Yes, I reckon Lewis might have actually made that date himself—such and such a compartment on the eight-thirty stopping train to Slough. And as for what happened then—I've heard one like it before. The chap who's being blackmailed produces the dough in pound notes and says: 'Count them, damn you,' and the blackmailer loses his head seeing all that money and gets busy counting—and that's the chance for one over the boko—followed in this case by a quick shove out of a door which has been organised to open at a kick."

"Well, it's a nice neat reconstruction which accounts for what happened," said Macdonald, "although it doesn't tell us who did what. The point is, do I tell the Plymouth chaps we'd like to have Burrow brought up to us for questioning?"

"Yes to that, every time," said Reeves. "We'll have to check him anyway. He may be as innocent as his own dairy cows, but he's got to account for every minute he spent in London, and we've got something to check him by."

"I think so," said Macdonald. "If he's not on in this act we've got to get him tidied out of the way. Meanwhile, you might consider this one: do you think there's anybody else in your set of charmers who frequent the Whistling Pig who might be involved in this Lewis-O'Flynn setup? If so, the sooner we pull them in the better."

Reeves sat and pondered. "Too much been happening?" he queried, as though talking to himself. "Don't you reckon we've got most of it accounted

for—excepting the attack on Greville himself? We're still groping there: but the rest's all explainable in common-sense terms. Bert Lewis saw what happened when Greville was attacked; we're justified in assuming that because it was Lewis's one and only overcoat that was dragged over the muck under that trolley. Barney O'Flynn guessed that Lewis was on the spot when Greville was attacked. I'm certain of that one, even though I can't produce positive evidence for it. You see these cosh boys like Lewis don't commit murder without a reason—it's not good business. The reason O'Flynn was put away was that he could have laid information against Lewis as accessory after the fact. And Henry Brown was knocked out for being too nosy. It seems to tie up to my way of thinking and I don't reckon any of the other boys lent a hand, though I'll have another bash at making that publican open up. Albert Hodgeson's not feeling too good: he's not had a real spotlight concentrated on his premises before."

Reeves studied Macdonald quizzically. "That lot in the train, Chief: we've got Lewis and O'Flynn sorted out. O'Flynn was the chap in the corridor—'the dirty one,' according to Sally Dillon—and was she right! Maybe 'the respectable one' was Burrow. Til tell you one thing: no chap who Miss Dillon would have called 'respectable' ever frequented the Whistling Pig."

The telephone beside Macdonald's elbow rang, and after a brief colloquy he said: "Then I'll come along to you now." Turning to Reeves, he said: "That's James, in the Special Branch. Reporting on Garstang. So here we go round the mulberry bush again."

"Garstang . . . that's grand," said Reeves. "I'll be toddling off to the less salubrious quarters of the borough of Paddington, putting the fear of God into that Hodgeson. I'll give you a ring when I get back and you can tell me the worst. Good-bye till then."

3

James was a man of fifty, long, lean, disillusioned-looking, yet with a humorous twist to his close-shut lips, and mobile, angular, dark eyebrows which did everything but talk.

"David Garstang: age 48, naturalised British subject, father German, mother English," he began. "All he told you is true, Chief, so far as our information goes. For obvious reasons we can't check all of it. Incidentally I had the job of

screening him when he landed from a Portuguese boat at Bristol in July 1941—and I didn't handle him any too tenderly then."

"Why didn't you like him?" asked Macdonald promptly.

James shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps I was feeling tired—and a bit sore as well: we'd been having a packet, hadn't we, and he was German-born. Then he told me that Bob Lockett had got pulled in. Lockett had been in Germany since Munich: he was one of the best chaps we'd got—and someone gave him away: they blew the gaff on Garstang, too, only he sensed how things were going and beat it. He was damned clever to get out the way he did. Oh yes: we checked up on him as far as we-could—I went on with it for two years, through some of our own fellows who were helped by the French escape organisations. I didn't catch him out anywhere, and the high-ups thought the world of him. He brought quite a lot of useful information with him." He fell silent, and Macdonald waited. At last James went on:

"I'm like Peter Reeves—unreasonable in odd ways. I thought how easy it'd be . . . I know we pulled in all the German agents over here, early on. You know all about that. But I often wondered if one or two of them were clever enough to do here what Garstang did in Germany—prepare a niche beforehand. Switch over with some respectable, established national and take up their identity. I don't know. Anyway, all I can tell you is that Garstang's got a clean sheet so far as our records go. Highly meritorious."

"Thanks. Now you can listen to me for a bit." Once again Macdonald outlined his case, tersely, skilfully, omitting no essential. He concluded by saying: "I want to ask the old man to have you sent to Cologne, to check up on Salcombe's story."

"O.K. by me," said James. "It's damned odd: that'll mean seeing Garstang again. You say he knew the place Salcombe described . . . it'll be interesting to watch Garstang's face when he sees me again."

"You think it might shake him?" asked Macdonald.

"He won't like it, no matter what," said James. "He resented me from the word go in '41—and you couldn't blame him. He knew I'd got an idea he'd queered Bob Lockett's pitch to get away himself. One thing about Garstang, he's as near to being a thought reader as a man can be. It's no use putting on an act with him, he always senses what's underneath. But I admit I shall take a sneaking pleasure in asking him for details about the house Greville recognised. I'd better see Salcombe, too, just in case Garstang's pulling a fast one."

"Yes, I'll arrange that," said Macdonald. "You know it's odd:

I like Garstang. I'm bound to suspect every word he says, but there's still something I like about him."

"One would," said James dryly. "I admit all that. I told you I was being unreasonable—but I shan't do your job any the worse on that account."

"I know you won't," said Macdonald. "Incidentally, how's your hardy perennial getting on—the Dorward story?"

"It isn't—not so far as finding out anything about his alleged one-time presence in England is concerned, though I admit that I've got more interested in the whole story since U.S.A. coughed up a few more facts about him. Dorward wasn't an ordinary businessman: he was a metallurgist—an expert. He came to Europe a couple of times during the phony war period, travelling via Lisbon, of course—it was the only route—complete with all the visas and recommendations U.S.A. could produce. He came over last in December 1940, and his intention was to get to Sweden, and then come to England if there was any reasonable chance of getting here. If you ask me, he was acting as go-between for the high-ups, but they won't admit that. The only useful fact I've got out of them is that he had a business associate in London named Cartoffel. Walter B. Cartoffel. This chap had a flat in Baker Street, which was run for him by a servant named Freedman or Freeman."

"Cartoffel?" queried Macdonald. "Isn't that a German name?"

"Yes, but lots of good U.S.A. citizens have German names. *Kartoffel* is German for potato. It's also the sort of name which might be remembered, because it's a very odd name. Anyway, drawing a bow at a venture, I advertised, asking anybody who remembered Cartoffel, Dorward, or Freedman to communicate in the usual way. I'm getting a few answers—mostly to say that Cartoffel was killed by a V.1 in '44—but something may turn up."

"Where did you advertise?" asked Macdonald.

"Agony Column. *Times, Telegraph,* and so forth. Didn't you notice them? I thought you always read the *Times* personal column—I do."

"So do I, generally. I enjoy it. When were your chits in?"

"A fortnight ago—oh, it was when you were up in Inverness, so I take it you read The Scotsman. I'll tell you if anything materialises, but I think it's pretty remote."

"Try the name on Garstang and see if he reacts," said Macdonald.

James laughed. "It's a pretty long shot. . . . Still, it might crop up in the

course of conversation, so to speak." He sat very still for a moment. "After all, Garstang was in Germany at the same time Dorward was said to be. I wonder if you've got something there. . . . It'd be damned odd . . ."

"Odd things do happen sometimes," said Macdonald.

James nodded. "Do you remember a chap named Blakely in our set of toughs?" he asked. Macdonald pondered:

"Was he the chap who was parachuted into Italy?"

"That's him: he got his when the Jerries released Musso. Blakely once told me that he believed Dorward was associated with an Itye named Francesco Revari: they'd got some sort of racket going in the way of an escape route into Switzerland. It all sounded pretty improbable to me, and I couldn't follow it up at the time because Blakely was bunged off into Italy. I tried the name on the F.B.I., but they didn't react—said it was all my eye. It'll be a damned funny thing if Garstang does know anything about this old wives' tale. . . . Of course I never tried him on the Dorward story."

"Well, now's your chance," said Macdonald. "You'll be able to have quite a chat. What was your Italian brigand called?"

"Francesco Revari. Don't tell me you know anything about him?"

"No. I'm pretty certain I don't. It's just that the sound of the name seemed to ring a bell."

"Oh Lord!" groaned James. "How often have I heard that one!"

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

WHEN SALLY DILLON said to Brian: "Won't you come in and have a drink and a talk? I somehow feel we might puzzle things out a bit together," Brian had replied: "Thanks a lot," and then turned to Jenkins, "if that's all right by you, sir?"

"That's all right by me, son. You've had enough of our department for one day. But you'd better tell me—how do you get back to the chief inspector's? I shall be in the soup if you're posted missing." Very carefully Jenkins explained the route to Millbank, and Sally laughed as she said:

"Libby and I will take him to Oxford Circus and put him on an 88 bus, and then he can't go wrong."

Jenkins drove off and Brian protested as they walked up the garden path: "I'm not such a mutt as all that. I've been around a bit—not spent the whole of my life singling turnips."

Sally opened the front door, switched on the lights and led Brian into the big, peaceful sitting room.

"I'm sorry it's only an electric fire: we generally have an open fire, but our treasure was sacked for us by the distaff side of the C.I.D. . . . Oh, but someone's laid the fire and left me a little note."

"The C.I.D. again, perhaps," said Brian. "Let me light it for you. I'm good at fires."

"Then do, and I'll get the drinks," said Sally. "Would you like gin, sherry, or just beer?"

"Just beer, please," he said, kneeling down in front of the fireplace. When Sally came back, the fire was crackling cheerfully up the chimney.

"I can't tell you how much I like this room, and being here," said Brian. "Today's been a sort of nightmare, one damned thing after another. Those C.I.D. chaps are about as decent as men can be, they're kind and considerate and—well, just plain decent. But it was all right outside anything I've ever known, and pretty grim with it. This . . ." he looked round the spacious, softly

lighted room. “It’s beautiful,” he said, “but it’s homely as well. It’s a happy room.”

“I always feel that about it,” said Sally. “I’m glad you like it. Here’s your drink. I’m going to tell you straight out I was awfully glad to have you coming in here this evening. Libby’s sometimes kept late, and I’d have hated to sit here by myself, just wondering.”

He took the tankard from her with a word of thanks, and said: “I’m awfully sorry you’ve been dragged into all this. It’s rotten for you, and it seems so unfair.”

“Oh, I don’t feel a bit like that about it,” replied Sally. “You see, I liked Richard, and I did have the feeling I’d like to help him, because he looked so troubled. The only thing I’m sorry about is that I hadn’t the courage to butt in again when we got to Paddington and ask him where he was going and if he knew his way. I did think of it, but he’d forgotten all about me and gone all remote.” She curled up in one of the big armchairs and went on: “Would you like to tell me about him? You see, I was talking to him and noticing him for quite a long time, and you know all about him. Together we might think of something.”

“Yes. I’d like to,” replied Brian. “I did my best to tell everything to Macdonald—he’s a fine chap, isn’t he?—but I expect I shall remember much more when I’m talking to you: just small things, which may not matter in themselves, but which add up to something real. . . .”

Sally sat very quiet, curled up in her chair, while Brian talked, hesitatingly at first, then more quickly and easily. He began with his first meeting with Richard, when the latter was still virtually speechless, and went on through their school days, when Richard was always top of the form and Brian was well down in the middle. He told her of their school holidays together: how he went up to Moorcock in the spring and helped with the lambs and how Richard came to the Salcombes’ farm in August and helped with harvest: how in September they went off on their bikes and explored Devon from coast to coast, went down into Cornwall and up into Wales, always together. He told her how well Richard had done in his “School Cert” and Higher, and how he had been awarded his university grant and had gone to Reading to be interviewed by the college authorities before he and Brian went into the Army for their National Service.

“Of course, I didn’t stay on at school as long as Richard did,” he explained. “I’m not brainy, not in that way. I did a course at an Ag Col—and jolly useful it

was, but I knew it'd make a lot of difference when we started farming together if Richard was an expert on all the soil chemistry business, and the scientific side of breeding dairy cattle."

"Yes. I'm sure it would," put in Sally, "but Brian, getting back to the here-and-now, Richard had been to Reading before that evening in the train."

"Why, yes. Just that once. But it was only to see the university people," said Brian. "He didn't stay there or anything."

"Did he tell you about it?" asked Sally. "And can you remember just what he said?"

"I'll try—but why this harping on Reading?" asked Brian. "Macdonald asked about that too——"

"Never mind about Macdonald now," she replied quietly. "It's I who am asking you this time. You see, it was after we'd stopped at Reading that Richard got so much queerer. I couldn't bear to look at him, his face looked so wretched. Before that he'd been queer and vague, but it wasn't until the train stopped at Reading and that frightful-looking boy got in that Richard looked quite . . . well, abnormal. So do tell me anything you can remember about his going there for his interview."

"I'll try," said Brian, "but I didn't see him immediately afterwards—not for about a fortnight. He said the principal at the college, or whoever he saw, had been no end decent——"

"Wait a minute," said Sally. "What train did he travel by?"

"Oh, he went up early from Plymouth, by the fast one. I think he got to Reading about four, and he saw the people he'd got to see—it didn't take long—and mooched about the buildings and experimental station a bit, and then he went up to London and stayed the night. He could have caught the night train back, but he was a bit fed up with travelling, so he went up to London and stayed at a cheap place he found somewhere near to Paddington. He said it was pretty foul, but it didn't matter for one night."

"But can't you see—I'm certain something must have happened to him when he was in Reading that time," cried Sally. "It was something that happened the first time which made him queer the time I was with him. I remember I went to sleep for a bit when the train was crawling along after we left Taunton, and when I woke up I asked Richard where we'd got to, and he said: 'Somewhere between Newbury and Reading,' as though he knew the line quite well. And he asked me if I was worried about the train running so late. He was nice about it—kind without being fussy. Of course neither of us

expected the train to stop at Reading, and I think that upset him."

"I just can't make out all this business about Reading and the other chap in the train—the bookies' tout," said Brian unhappily. "It's as though you were all arguing that Richard got to know this blighter when he went to Reading the first time, and that he got involved in some mess—something he was ashamed of. Well, it doesn't make sense to me. Richard may be a bit queer sometimes and have vague fits and get down when he tries to remember and can't, but apart from that lie's plenty of gump. And you know we were both brought up in the same sort of way—old-fashioned, I dare say, but very straight. You don't suddenly go off the rails when you've been brought up like that."

"No, I know you don't," agreed Sally, "but sometimes something happens quite unexpectedly, and has results you can't foresee—just like Richard and me talking in the train. It seemed so natural to talk to him, when we stood looking out over the sea, but it's no use saying it didn't have any result. I've got tied up in this thing, whatever it is. The result's out of all proportion to the cause, isn't it? It began when I said: 'Doesn't it look lovely,' and Richard said: 'Yes: it's grand. I love that bit, across Shaldon Bridge to Maidencoombe.' "

"Yes. I see what you mean," said Brian unhappily. "You're thinking Richard might have talked to that cosh boy before, the other time he went from Reading to London . . . lent him a quid, or something like that, and got mixed up in something he didn't understand. But why was the cosh boy killed . . . ? They took me to see his body, in case I recognised him. . . . It was pretty grim. . . ." He broke off and sat listening for a moment. "Wasn't that somebody coming in at your front door?" he asked.

"I expect it's Libby," said Sarah. She got up to go to the door, but Brian jumped up and reached the door first, opened it wide, and stood staring out into the lighted passage. There was something so aggressive in his attitude that Sally's heart gave an uncomfortable jump and a shiver ran through her.

Staring past Brian, she cried: "Why, it's Dr. Garstang! Goodness, you did give us a jump!"

2

Garstang came forward into the room. "Sorry, Sally—but you gave me a jump too. Do you know your front door wasn't fastened—anybody could have walked in."

"I know it wasn't fastened," she retorted. "I left it on the latch for Libby. I always do, because she's generally got a lot to carry and it saves her having to fiddle with a key. It's all right—Brian was here, so there was nothing to worry about."

"I'm sorry, but I think there's a lot to'worry about," said Garstang unhappily.

Sally stood in front of the fire, hands on her hips, arms akimbo. "Look here," she said indignantly. "I'm not your secretary now: I'm just myself, and this is my home. I'm not going to be frightened into dithers and live behind locked doors and pretend everything's abnormal and pathological and horror-making. Once I start doing that it'll get me down and I shall expect to see murderers round every corner. I'm going to behave as though things were ordinary—and so are you, Dr. Garstang. So please sit down and tell me what you'd like to drink. Brian, the beer's in a crate under the kitchen sink, so please go and get two more bottles."

"O.K.," said Brian.

Again Garstang said: "Sally dear, I'm sorry. I don't want to be unreasonable, but you know nothing about this boy——"

"And he knows nothing about you," she flashed back, "so he thinks you were listening at the door, and you think he wants to bat me over the head, and I know you're both being equally silly. So let's forget all about that, and tell me why you came to see me." She suddenly laughed. "It's the first time you've called on me, Dr. Garstang. I haven't behaved very nicely so far, but I feel very much honoured that you've come. Don't you think this is a nice room? Libby chose all the colours and materials, and most of the furniture's hers, too, so I'm not afraid to brag about it."

"It's beautiful, Sally," he replied, "and it looks just right for you." He broke off as Brian came in with bottles and glasses.

"I like your kitchen," he observed. "You can stand in one place and reach everything. My farmhouse kitchen seems like a ten-acre field in comparison."

Sally turned to Garstang. "Sherry?—not a very good one I'm afraid—gin and lime or beer?"

"I'll have some sherry, please. To drink to your pleasant menage," said Garstang. "You haven't been here long, have you?"

"Since September," said Sally. "Libby and I picked one another up at the V & A, in the summer. We were both staring at furniture and found we liked the same things. We both lived in hostels then, and loathed it, so we decided to

pool resources and find a flat. It's been a great success."

"I'm sure it has—and I'm sure it will be again," said Garstang. "Look here, Sally. I've only got a few minutes to spare, but I'm going to say what I came to say. I think it'd be much wiser if you were to go home and stay with your mother until all this confused business has been sorted out. I feel I have the right to say this, because it was my suggestion that brought you up to London."

Sally stood by the fire, her face flushed, her chin up. "I know you mean that kindly, Dr. Garstang. You've always been good to me and I'm not ungrateful—but I couldn't possibly do it. I'm not going to leave Libby Maine alone here, just after we've settled down and got things running comfortably. And least of all am I going to run away, if you think there's anything to run away from, and leave Libby to cope."

"But Sally, nothing's likely to happen to Elizabeth Maine: this trouble's nothing to do with her. It wasn't she who spoke to that boy in the train——"

"Look here, sir," said Brian wrathfully. "I'm not going to pass that. Richard's not a criminal, or a leper. Why shouldn't Sally have spoken to him?"

"Do you realise that the two men who walked up the platform with him have both been murdered?" cried Garstang, and Sally burst out:

"Oh, do leave off, both of you. I don't want to hear another word about it. And I'm not going back home. I'm staying here."

"You're having quite a party, Sally," put in an ironic voice from the door. "Are you in quarantine, or is Dr. Garstang giving you the sack?"

3

It was Elizabeth Maine. *Soignee,* unruffled, her cheeks tinged faintly pink with the chill air, her lips curving to a smile, she advanced into the room. "Good evening, sir," she said to Garstang. "I'm sorry if I sounded flippant, but why do you want Sally to go home?" Without waiting for an answer she turned to Brian. "Good evening. I don't think we've met."

"It's Brian Salcombe, Libby," said Sally. "He came up to see the boy in the train, who's his friend. Oh dear, I'm sorry if that sounds confused, but I seem to be floundering. This is Elizabeth Maine, Brian. Pour her out some sherry. She likes some when she comes in—and it's her sherry, anyway."

Brian grinned at Elizabeth and went across to the table where the drinks

stood, and Garstang said:

"I'm not trying to sack Sally, Miss Maine: quite the contrary. She's the best secretary I've ever had and I don't want to lose her, but I have suggested that she should go home until the C.I.D. has sorted out all this trouble about 'the boy in the train,' as Sally calls him."

"I see," said Elizabeth, smiling at Brian as she took the glass he proffered. "Safer for Sally . . . nice and alliterative. Of course I don't know all the details, but even so, I don't know that you're right. If anybody's got a down on Sally they could get her in Devon quite as easily as in London; more easily, perhaps, for we've got a pet of a policeman outside. However, it's really for her to decide, isn't it?"

"I've decided," said Sally. "I'm staying here. And Dr. Garstang, if you write to my mother and tell her about all this, so that she gets in a panic, I'll never forgive you. Never. So please do forget all about your idea of sending me home, because I'm not going, anyway."

"I think she's right," said Elizabeth. "Running away's never any good."

"Of course it isn't," murmured Brian, *sotto voce.*

Garstang stood and looked at them unhappily: three very young faces, but each of the faces with a lot of character in it. But it was their youth which struck him most: they all belonged to a generation which made its own decisions, and to them he was old and this awareness struck him like a blow.

"Very well," he said quietly. "I've said what I felt I had to say: perhaps Miss Maine is right, and it's for Sally to decide. So good night—and I think your room is beautiful."

"Come again one day when the sun's shining," said Libby. "Of course I'm coming to see you out—and I'll promise to bolt the door quite safely, let down the drawbridge, and man the keep."

Her laughing voice came across from the passage, and Sally turned to Brian.

"Was that awful of me? He's been so good to me."

"It wasn't awful at all," said Brian stoutly. "This isn't his thing. It's nothing to do with him: and if anybody's to give you advice Macdonald can do it, or that game old scout who toted me around—Jenkins. I like him. He's a hundred per cent human."

Elizabeth slithered back into the room again with a gliding step that was partly a "mannequin act," partly the poise and interplay of beautifully developed muscles.

"Oof!" she cried. "Hurt feelings—but it was better to say it right out. Brian's

staying to supper, isn't he? We'll open some tins to celebrate. That'll be a treat for him. I expect he's used to eggs and cream and good red meat and all the things we can't get, so some frankforters from U.S.A. and grenadillas from down under will be a change for him."

"Look here, are you quite sure——" began Brian, but Libby cut in:

"The one good thing about me is that I'm never half sure," she said. "You can make up the fire, put the glasses in the kitchen, and then go to sleep on the chesterfield till we wake you up. Come on, Sally—we'll slap the frankforters in the oven with all the potato crisps we've got."

A few moments later Sally sat on Libby's bed while the latter "did her face."

"I'm afraid I wasn't as polite as I should have been," said Sally, still worrying about Garstang.

"That's enough of that. He's got to learn where he gets off," said Libby. "Did he tell you he was at Paddington Station himself on Monday evening, Sally?"

"What?" gasped Sally, sounding as though the wind had been knocked out of her.

"At Paddington Station," repeated Libby calmly, "at the time your train should have got in and didn't. Charles Masters was there, studying the arrival indicator, because he was trying to meet an aunt who never travelled after all. Charles saw Garstang, dithering around the indicator when '90 minutes late' went up. After that he went home—Charles, I mean."

"But why on earth did Dr. Garstang . . gasped Sally.

"Take a deep breath and pull yourself together," said Libby. "Of course he went to meet you, just to see you were safe. You ought to have realised it long ago, Sally. You're quick enough with people you don't know, but you've always regarded Garstang as tantamount to the Pope, Mahatma Gandhi, and Socrates rolled into one. Garstang's an ordinary, middle-aged man who lost his heart to a teen-ager—being you. I knew it at once when he gave me the once-over that day you told him you and I were going to share digs."

"Cripes . . ." said Sally, and the voice which uttered the idiotic word held a whole world of bewilderment and enlightenment.

"So now you know," said Libby. "It's just one of those things. I think he ought to have told you he was at Paddington, because someone's bound to blow the gaff to the C.I.D. eventually and it won't look so good if he hasn't told them. But he's no right to start arranging your life for you—and if you do decide that London's too foggy to live in, I've got some much better ideas than Garstang has. Now let's go and cope with the tins."

4

By the time that the contents of the tins had been dished up, and the three young people had settled round the supper table, Sally had got her second wind after Libby's shattering analysis. If Sally were quieter than usual, Libby was more animated.

"I must tell you, I'm nearly bursting with it," she said. "There's been a scheme on for exchanging English and Swiss physiotherapists, and I've been offered six months at a Swiss clinic up in the mountains near St. Moritz, partly as demonstrator, partly as student—a sort of marriage ceremony between national techniques. Of course I said I'd go—who wouldn't?—but I've cadged a job for you, Sally, as well. They wanted some English typist-interpreters, and your French is better than most. Anyway, I think it's a far far better thing to do than for you to trundle back to Kingsbridge and get broody."

"Lord! I should say it was!" exclaimed Brian. "Glory, you'll get all the winter sports."

"Yes. Skiing at the week ends and dancing every evening," said Libby happily. She turned to Brian. "When your buddy's fit to travel, you'd better bung him out to us and we'll make him the world's fittest again. Oh, damn that phone . . . I do hope it's not another blight."

"I'll go," said Sally.

She came running back a few moments later, her face alight with laughter.

"I do think they're peaches—the C.I.D. That was that old angel face of an Inspector Jenkins: he's sending us a good honest charlady in the morning because they sacked Rosa for us and he doesn't like to think of us with all the chores to do."

"Here's a hearty vote of thanks to him," cried Libby. "They're certainly doing their best for us—a bobby outside and a char inside—won't they have fun."

"What's this about Rosa, and why did they sack her for you?" asked Brian, and Sally said:

"Let's tell him about the book, Libby, and how it disappeared. He might have some other books Richard had scribbled in."

"Do you know, I think that's quite an idea," replied Libby.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DR. GARSTANG walked down the garden path which led from Sally's front door to the gate, and paused a moment when he reached the pavement. Something about the set of his head and shoulders denoted both weariness and defeat; two men were watching him (though Garstang noticed neither of them) and both thought, in their own particular idiom, the equivalent of: "He looks as though he's had it."

It was just as the psychiatrist was about to cross the road (with singularly little attention to the traffic which roared unceasingly along the Maida Vale) that he felt a hand on his arm, and a man's voice spoke close beside him.

"It's Dr. Garstang, isn't it? You probably don't remember me, but I've just been to call on you."

Garstang shook the other's hand off impatiently and took a step back, and the two men stood and looked at each other in the light of the street lamp which shone down on them.

"Yes. I remember you. I'm not likely ever to forget you," said Garstang. "Your name is James—or it was once—and you were a stooge in M.I.5. You were wrong in every supposition you made so far as I was concerned."

"We all make mistakes sometimes," said James, and his voice was quite good-tempered. "I'm still a stooge in M.I.5, which means that my mistakes haven't been essential ones. The one mistake which is never forgiven in our job is to give a chap the benefit of the doubt if doubt there is. Now I realise that it gives you no pleasure to see me—but a job's a job. Chief Inspector Macdonald has asked me to get in touch with you about this story young Salcombe told you today—the Cologne story."

Garstang stood very still, with his hands thrust down into his pockets. "Why not ask Salcombe about it, and get your facts at first hand?" he asked. "Presumably you know where he is."

"Yes, I know where he is, all right," rejoined James. "That's why I'm here. I was going in to see him, but it'd be more satisfactory to have a word with you

first, if you'll be good enough to answer a few questions. I can see Salcombe later. My car's just across the road—can I run you home? Talking on the pavement's a cold job."

"And if I don't care to be driven home in your car?" enquired Garstang.

"That's up to you, sir. You can go by bus or tube or taxi if you'd rather, but you'll still find me waiting on the doorstep when you get home. That's how it is. I've no wish to be more tiresome than I've got to be, but I'm on duty, and that's all there is to it."

"Oh, very well. I'll come with you," said Garstang, "but don't expect me to forget the part you played when last we met."

He turned with James, and they crossed the road to the waiting car. Like all police cars, it was a beautifully serviced vehicle and James handled it like an expert, so that they slid off smoothly and silently, gliding between buses and taxis as though the traffic opened up to allow their passing. They turned left, off the main road, slid-through St. John's Wood and into the quiet curve of the Outer Circle to York Gate and so across the Marylebone Road and into Wimpole Street.

"Well—you can drive: I'll say that for you," said Garstang. "I respect real skill when I meet it."

"I daresay that's a backhanded compliment," said James dryly; "I've driven all over Europe in my time and my life's depended on being able to drive—just a bit better than the chap who was after me."

Garstang opened the front door with his latchkey, and James followed him into the hall.

"Come upstairs to my flat," said Garstang. "You're on duty, I'm not. I've had enough of my consulting room today. There are over fifty stairs, but I don't suppose you mind that."

He switched the lights on and went ahead up the carpeted stairs: the dignified house was very quiet: James wondered if the caretakers were in, far below in their basement, but there wasn't a sound to indicate that there was anybody in the house but themselves. They went right up to the top floor, which was enclosed as a self-contained flat, and again Garstang opened a door with a latchkey, and led James across a narrow passage into a sitting room.

It was a comfortable room, though very plain: there were big modern chairs, a deep plain-pile carpet, a great number of books on built-in shelves, and no pictures, photographs, or ornaments. Carpet, upholstery, and curtains were a warm greyish colour, and the walls and ceiling were a lighter tone of

the same colour. It was a markedly restful room, and James said:

"You're nice and peaceful, all on your own up here."

"Yes. It's as quiet a spot as you could find in London," said Garstang. "When you've been listening to interminable expressions of other people's confusions all day, you want to come back to a room which poses no problems. You'd better take your coat off—it's warm in here. Sit down. I'm going to have a drink. If you'd like to join me, help yourself."

He opened a cupboard, produced whisky, syphon, and glasses, and mixed himself a whisky and soda: his movements were deft and very quiet: there was no rattle of glasses or indication of tremor in his competent hands, for all the weariness of his face. Putting the glasses and drinks on a low table between their two chairs, he lit a cigarette and said:

"Well? What do you want to know?"

"First, about the house in Cologne young Greville recognised, sir."

"Yes. You probably know it. You know Cologne as well as I do—or very nearly. If you drive out of the city towards Bonn, past the Severin, and through the Lindenthal area, you pass the municipal offices, which were built in the late twenties——"

"Yes: German sham Gothic, running to height and spires and pinnacles and suchlike extravagances," put in James.

"That's it, and a hundred yards further on there's a crossroads: if you turn left—eastwards, that is, towards the Rhine, there are some older houses."

"Yes. Wait a minute. Lindenstrasse," said James. "A wealthy Jewish family named Nanheim owned the big house behind the lime trees: it was confiscated and presented to one of Himmler's stooges—we hoofed him out in '46."

"Yes, but before you reach that, there's a less pretentious little house, with a fine cedar of Lebanon on the lawn, and some copper beech trees: that's the house Greville remembered. It was a school for small boys—what we should call a prep school, and Pastor Baumgarten had run it for years. Greville must have been at school there, of course. The pastor made a point of taking English boys if he could get them."

"That's quite a point," said James. "Accepting your assumption that Greville was at school there, how do you work out the rest of the story?"

"Either of us could work it out," said Garstang wearily, "though we'd have to guess our way along. The boy was between seven and nine years old at the time. It's to be supposed his parents were living in Germany: they were English-speaking, because the boy spoke English when he recovered his

speech. He didn't utter a word of German so far as I can gather, and that leads me to believe that he hadn't been at the school very long. If his parents were English, they'd have tried to get him—and presumably themselves—out of Germany before war was declared. On the other hand there's the chance that they sent the boy out of Germany, but stayed themselves."

"The Grevilles found the boy in March '41," said James, "nearly twenty months after war was declared."

Garstang nodded. "There's more than one way of explaining what happened in the interval," he said. "The boy might have been sent into France, or the Netherlands, and have eventually arrived in England as a refugee. Hundreds of them got over here, you know that, months after the fall of France. It seems consistent with the rest of the story: if the boy had been living the life of a fugitive, with people who were always on the run, cut off from his own parents, and had arrived in England during the blitz, the bombing might have been the last straw: it didn't 'turn his brain,' to use the common phrase, it drove his memory underground, as it were. It doesn't often happen—but it can."

"That's your pigeon—the loss of memory," said James, "but I'm interested in your earlier point, that the boy's parents may have sent him out of Germany, but stayed too long themselves and got caught there. That'd explain why nobody ever claimed him: if the boy were brought over as a refugee, and the folks who brought him were killed in the bombing, there wouldn't have been anybody left to claim him."

"That was my own assumption," replied Garstang.

"But why Plymouth?" argued James. "They wouldn't have kept refugees there: they were sent to reception camps inland."

"Admittedly: but fishing craft from Europe did get to this country: they made port all along the Cornwall-Devon coast, from Falmouth to Brixham. If a skipper had risked bringing his craft over, he'd have landed at the first inlet he could make——running up to Devonport through the shelter of Cawsand Bay, likely enough, and if he did it on the night of the Plymouth blitz, the upshot wasn't so surprising after all." Garstang paused a moment, and then added: "What followed can never be proved. I gather that the child's clothes were half burnt off him: there was nothing in his pockets, nothing to prove identity—that fits in with the refugee idea, to my mind. Of course if he'd been found on any other night than that one, half the police of the county would have got busy analysing his charred rags. As it happened the police had their

hands full with more urgent matters just then."

"My God, they had," agreed James. "You've given a lot of thought to this, sir. How do you connect up the boy's appearance on Roborough Down with what happened to him at Paddington Station?"

"At the moment I don't, because I'm not being given the chance to connect up anything," said Garstang. "As I see it, there are two lines of approach: one is the police method, to work backwards from ascertained facts: the other is to go back and investigate from the earliest known event—Greville's recognition of Pastor Baumgarten's house. Salcombe said: 'They're all dead.' It's very improbable, you know. Someone in that household will have survived—nurse, teacher, servant—and that someone could tell us who the boy was, and who his parents were." He broke off for a moment and James waited for him to go on. "You see, as a psychiatrist, I'm bound to take into consideration that the boy's memory was coming back. We don't know what he did, what enquiries he set going, what he remembered. Macdonald accepts—as he's bound to accept—that Greville came up to London to consult me. What we don't know is who else he came to consult: who met him when he arrived. . . ."

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"You've made a very interesting reconstruction, sir," said James, "but there's another interpretation of the same facts. You say that Greville was English, because he spoke English. Hadn't it occurred to you that he might have been American? You see, U.S.A. wasn't in the war at that period, and Americans were still persona grata in Germany. They could go in and get out."

"Quite true," said Garstang, "but how do you account for the disappearance of the parents? United States citizens weren't allowed to vanish off the map without some sort of pother being made. If the child had been American, enquiries would have been made about him."

"Where?" asked James. "The answer is obviously 'in Germany,' if the boy and his parents were in Germany. The enquiries would have gone through the American consulate, which was still functioning until U.S.A. declared war on the Axis after Pearl Harbor. As to whether any such records were salvaged, or whether anybody would remember anything about them is a different story. But leave that out for the moment: I'm suggesting that it would have been possible for an American businessman, or diplomat, or consular employe, to

get from Germany to Britain in the spring of 1941. It would probably have been a long trek, through Switzerland, France, and Spain, to Lisbon—unless the passengers concerned were important enough to be given seats in a German aircraft and get to Lisbon that way: and from Lisbon they could have come by sea—as you did yourself, sir."

"I might remind you that I didn't reach England until July '41," put in Garstang, "some months after Dick Greville had been found on Roborough Down." Suddenly he cried out in exasperation: "Am I to be haunted by you all my life? Weren't you satisfied with the facts you collected about me during the war? Didn't you go on long enough then?"

"I don't know, sir. I never have known," rejoined James. "As you know, the high-ups were satisfied and I was told to leave it alone. If you want me to be perfectly honest, I was sorry I wasn't allowed to go on a bit longer and get the issue cut and dried: it would have been more satisfactory for me and more satisfactory for you. The sight of me gives you a nasty taste in your mouth, I know that—all because we didn't get things tidied up after you left Dijon."

"And now you're trying to involve me in this story," said Garstang bitterly, "all because a perfectly honest army doctor thought I could help a boy who'd lost his memory."

"Who was regaining his memory," put in James. "You-yourself insisted on the importance of that point. Why?"

"You can answer your own questions," retorted Garstang. "Don't expect me to help you."

"Very well," went on James placidly. "As we see it—Macdonald and myself—the evidence seems to show that it was visual impressions which were the first to return when Greville's memory came to the surface again. He recognised German script when he saw it: he recognised that house when he saw it. It seems reasonable to me. A small boy doesn't read much, and words make less impression on him than things seen. So when he began to remember, it was through the medium of sight. He didn't remember names or facts, but he began to recognise places. And if that's so, he would be able to recognise faces." He broke off: "Is there anything inherently improbable in that, sir?"

Garstang shrugged his shoulders. "No. Not inherently. You can never tell how memory will behave, but the point you've made about a child retaining visual impressions is sound enough. But you can't give a simple explanation of the behaviour of memory," he added, speaking with a new emphasis. "Memory isn't a concrete thing. There's no seat of memory in the brain that's

known to surgeons or research workers. Memory is more like a chain reaction, or a wave movement: break a link in the chain, disrupt the wave—and it goes. And when it returns, it's often activated by some apparently extraneous cause. You forget a name, a word, a face—and something can recall them, some association, not in itself relevant." Again he broke off. "It's no use trying to explain anything as complex as memory in a few words, but I'd hazard this opinion: a memory which has been disrupted or suppressed can be brought to the surface again by a combination of associations—sight, hearing, even taste and smell can be the associating factor."

"Thank you for that exposition, sir," said James. "It's very helpful, for both Macdonald and I are off our beat on this subject. Getting back to my idea of the boy remembering things he once saw. Twelve years ago," he went on slowly: "to men of our age that's nothing. I can remember the first time I saw you, sir, twelve years ago. You had got a bus ticket in your hands, and you folded it up, into a narrower and narrower strip. . . . To a boy of twenty-one or so, twelve years is a very long time, but I think he might remember faces—or a face which had made a great impression on him, once."

"Possibly—but what has all this to do with me?" asked Garstang.

"You've been thinking all this over," said James obstinately: "you have your own particular skill, which gives you greater accuracy in assessing what might have happened inside that boy's mind. You have all the facts of the case that are known to us, and you've lived in Germany, first as a child, then, years later during the war, as a British agent, when you not only survived—against all the probabilities—but escaped. What I'm saying, in effect, is that you're better qualified to help me in this business than anybody else could be . . . if you want to help us."

"What do you expect me to do?" asked Garstang.

"I suppose I'm asking you to use your imagination, in the light of what you know," said James slowly.

Garstang lit another cigarette, and took his time before he replied. At length he said: "I should find it easier to debate possibilities if I weren't aware that you believe I'm tied up in this somehow. You will be assessing everything that I say in the light of that belief, waiting for me to slip up. I remember you of old. First of all, let me give you a professional opinion about Richard Greville himself. He's going to recover, and the probability is that his brain will be normal and his physique and nervous system undamaged. That's a matter of physical probabilities, which his surgeon can assess. But from the

point of view of my own science—the study of mind and all that mind implies—I think it's very improbable he will remember anything that happened immediately prior to being knocked out."

"He'll never be able to tell us who did it?" asked James.

"That's my opinion. Time will prove. But you—the police—aren't only out to find who attacked Greville: it's your job to find who murdered the other two men who were on that same train."

"Obviously—but they're all tied up," said James.

Again Garstang fell silent, then he went on: "You asked me to use my imagination, to hazard a reconstruction in the light of my own specialised information, and your implication was that my knowledge of Germany should help me to do so. I suppose that you're arguing that what one man could do, another man could do."

James made no reply, and Garstang went on: "As you know, I found a method which enabled me to live unsuspected in wartime Germany. I exchanged personalities, as it were, with another doctor shortly before the war. I, of course, was a qualified medical man before I studied psychiatry. I took over the running of a clinic to which another man had recently been appointed and I was accepted as that man. The only reason I ever came under suspicion was because suspected persons consulted me—as their medical adviser."

"Yes," said James.

"What I did in Germany a German could have done in England, if he had organised his 'exchange' well before the war," went on Garstang. "Once he had been accepted, as I was accepted, there was no reason for suspicion to arise unless extraneous circumstances prompted suspicion. It would have been so much easier in England—no Gestapo, no paid informers, no everlasting fear of your next-door neighbour. And the odd thing is, that a man who pulled off a substitution like that could have gone on living in England. During the war, he couldn't have got out. After the war, he wouldn't have wanted to. What would he have been—a nazi agent?"

"Yes," said James.

"Well, there's the supposition," said Garstang, "and don't tell me that you and Macdonald didn't think it out before I did. The boy's memory began to come back in Germany. When he returned to England he saw—or remembered—a face or a name which was once familiar to him. And the owner of that face or name said: 'It's the end for one of us—and you rather

than me.' "

Garstang stubbed his cigarette out. "And what proof have I that mine wasn't the face he recognised? I know that's in your mind. And there's this to it. I've seen Greville's face. I was at the hospital when they changed his dressings. You haven't seen him, but I can tell you his face has a lot of character in it: the bony structure, brows, jaw, cheekbones: the angle of his nose, the colour of his hair—they're not only characters which would have been dominant in childhood, they're probably characters inherited from his own father. Whoever studied Richard Greville's face may well have seen the father in the son."

"That's a very interesting point," said James. "If the idea you have outlined has any substance—and I admit that Macdonald and I debated a similar possibility—it explains a lot. It was a case not only of recognising but being recognised." He paused a moment, and then went on: "I'm very grateful to you for your patience, sir. I know how you feel about me. When I was checking up on you, I was only doing the job I was set to do. It was a job that had to be done and you knew it."

"Yes. I knew it: but after the life I'd lived for nearly two mortal years, it wasn't easy to be philosophic in the face of suspicion . . . and it's no easier now. I offered to go to Cologne because I believe I could find out who the boy is—but no. I suppose you'll go there, and if you make a mess of it you'll learn nothing."

"I'll do my best," said James, and his voice sounded the voice of a very commonplace man, a bit diffident, a bit complacent. He went on in just the same tone: "Do you remember the name Dorward, sir? Does it convey anything to you?"

Garstang sat perfectly still, then he said: "Can you tell me why you ask—give me an 'associating factor,' as it were?"

"I just wondered if the name conveyed anything to you," said James.

Garstang reached out to a rack which held newspapers and found a copy of *The Times.* He handed it to James. "Dorward. Cartoffel. Freedman," he quoted, "here in the Personal Column. I suppose you put this notice in. I read it, in the casual way that one does read that column, and the name Dorward seemed familiar. I looked through my files, to see if I had ever had a patient of that name—but I hadn't. I may be quite mistaken, just imagining the name was familiar."

"Could you have treated a patient of that name when you were practising in

Germany?" asked James.

Garstang took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes wearily: it didn't take any very acute powers of observation to note how strained and tired his face was.

"I can't tell you," he said. "I haven't a clue. The only thing I can say is that I'll think it over. If I think over the names I can remember in 1940 I may arrive at something. But it's pretty improbable. It isn't a German name—unless you've got it spelt wrong."

"No. It's spelt all right," said James. "Dorward was an American. He disappeared in 1941."

"Then I never knew him," said Garstang.

James got up. "Well, I won't trouble you any more now, sir. You're tired. I can see that."

"I'm dog-tired," said the other, "but if I can rake up any recollection of where I heard the name 'Dorward' I'll let you know."

And with that, James left him.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"I SWEAR THERE'S something, Jock. The name 'Dorward' shook him quite a bit," said James.

He was back at Scotland Yard again, reporting to Macdonald: the time was now nine o'clock in the evening. Reeves was pursuing his own researches in the hinterland of Paddington (probably entertaining "somebody's dream of Arabian nights") and Macdonald had been having a long telephone conversation with Ford worthy in Plymouth.

"This case needs a mind like a radio receiving set, geared to pick up different wave lengths," said Macdonald resignedly. "I've never met such a collection of extremes: we've got Reeves's bunch of charmers, about as dirty a set of chislers as the dregs of civilisation can produce: a psychiatrist whose training and intelligence represent civilisation at its highest—we hope: a farmer from Devon who isn't civilised at all if civilisation is an urban product, and an engineer who runs a well-established business in Reading for manufacturing miniature radio sets and deaf-aids."

"Don't you feel disposed to cancel the farmer out, Jock? "Hie whole business is too involved for a country bumpkin to be at the bottom of it."

"I certainly can't cancel him out merely because he looks the easiest guess," said Macdonald. "He was on that train, he'd got a motive, and he spent the following day in London and didn't get back home until late on the Wednesday evening. If you think farmers are simple, it's only because you know nothing about farmers. And getting back to your comment about Garstang—the fact that he admitted the name 'Dorward' rang a bell counts in his favour, not the reverse. It would have been perfectly easy for him to say he'd never heard the name. Hullo . . . what is it this time?"

He lifted the telephone and listened, and then said: "Send him up here." To James he said: "This is a plus for your theory, a minus for Reeves and me. The Paddington police have brought along a young journalist who has something to report."

The lad who was brought into Macdonald's room was a lively, alert-looking fellow of twenty-one or -two, his face showing plainly enough that this visit to Scotland Yard was an event in his young life.

"Robert Forbes?" asked Macdonald. "Sit down and tell us what you've got to say in your own way, but facts only."

"Yes, sir. I'm junior reporter on the *Cricklewood* Courier—at least, I'm in training, really. I live near Slough and travel to and from Paddington every day. Last Monday evening I got to Paddington about half-past seven: I went there by the tube, and walked across to the indicators to see what train I could get home: they'd got a sort of skeleton service running on account of the fog and they were chalking up the trains that were due to go out, not far from the arrival indicator. I saw Dr. David Garstang by the arrival indicator. I recognised him because I heard him giving evidence in court last month: it was at the Marylebone Police Court, when a young woman named Merrill was charged with shoplifting. I noticed Dr. Garstang particularly then, and I'm quite sure I saw him at Paddington Station on Monday evening. It wasn't only his face I recognised. He was wearing the same topcoat he wore when he gave evidence."

"Can you describe Dr. Garstang?" asked Macdonald.

"Yes, sir. I'd say he's five foot eleven, broad-shouldered, bony, but with a straight back. His hair was once black, but is going grey and thin on top. He has dark eyes and wears big glasses and I think he's shortsighted. He's got a long nose, rather hooked, and a nutcracker jaw, but somehow he looks kind. The overcoat was a sort of russet tweed, big and loose and not belted."

"And you're prepared to swear that you saw Dr. Garstang at Paddington Station about half-past seven on last Monday evening?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good. Now will you tell me why you mentioned this fact to the police: why, in your opinion, Dr. Garstang's presence at Paddington Station was of any significance?"

Forbes flushed a little, but he replied quite readily: "Well, sir, we've all been on our toes over these crimes in the Paddington area. News is our stock in trade, and we don't wait for news to come to us: we go out after it, or we should soon get the push if we didn't. We get what we can from the police—what they're willing to tell us, that is, and then we go round asking—snooping, if you like—but it's our job. Williams and I went to the mortuary, to see if we could get any facts, and it was at the mortuary we heard that Dr. Garstang was

taking an interest, so to speak. He'd been there shortly before us. When I told the police sergeant I'd seen Dr. Garstang on Monday evening, I did so because I hoped the sergeant might be a bit more forthcoming to me—freer with the gen, if you see what I mean. I didn't suggest Dr. Garstang was implicated in any way, sir."

"I'm glad to hear it," rejoined Macdonald. "Very well, Forbes. You've used your wits, and we're grateful to you for behaving straightforwardly about this. This officer will take you down to the public relations officer, who may be able to give you some information—or may not. But he'll give you a good mark, which may be of use to you some other time."

Forbes departed, flushed and gratified, and James said to Macdonald: "Well, there you are. If Garstang was all aboveboard, why didn't he tell you to start with he'd been at Paddington Station?"

"Well, I think I might guess the answer," rejoined Macdonald, "but we'd better find out what Garstang himself says."

"He'll deny it, of course," said James morosely.

Macdonald was just reaching for the telephone when an incoming call was indicated, and, having listened for a moment, Macdonald nodded to James to listen in on another receiver.

"Chief Inspector Macdonald? Weldon here. I'm a bit ashamed of bothering you, but I admit to feeling a spot jittered over all this business. You may remember I told you I had a vague idea that Dr. Garstang's face was familiar in some way, and my mind's been nagging away at it ever since I left you. I think I've placed him, but I can't be quite certain. The reason I'm ringing you is to ask if I could have a word with you later this evening. I'll come along to you, wherever you happen to be, if you're available."

"Yes, of course," rejoined Macdonald, "but I can save you the trouble of coming out—I'll come along to you. Are you at home now?"

"No. I'm not. I'm talking from a call box on the North Circular road. I'm on my way to see a chap who I think can check this idea of mine. And after I've seen him I'd rather come direct to have a word with you. It may be silly, but that's how I feel about it. I'm not used to this cosh-and-come-again entertainment that's going on."

"Look here, Mr. Weldon, if you feel apprehensive in any way, you've only got to tell me the number of the call box you're speaking from and I'll have a police car there in a matter of minutes."

"Good Lord, no. I don't mean that at all. I'm as right as rain in these parts.

It's just that I've got a thing about going home before I've told you the result of my evening's researches."

"Wouldn't it be more sensible if you told me what's in your mind now, Mr. Weldon?"

"No. It just wouldn't be fair. I'm only guessing, and I'm not going to say anything damaging about a man without a flicker of real evidence to bear me out. It's easier to say things than to unsay them. Just let me know where you will be in an hour's time and I'll put any ideas I've got at your disposal and you can sort them out. Don't imagine I'm the sort of hero who goes courting trouble. I'm not. I prefer to avoid trouble."

"Then why not tell me why it is that you've begun to get apprehensive in the last hour or so, Mr. Weldon: you didn't suggest anything of the kind when I saw you earlier this evening."

"I know I didn't, and I'm probably being a ninny to be worrying you now—but I told you I got an idea that I want to look into. And rather an odd thing happened . . . I say, are you there? This phone is a bit haywire."

"Yes. I'm here: the line isn't good, but I can hear you all right."

"Good. Well, shortly after I left you I went along to Poloni's for a quick meal, to save having to turn out again. I habitually go there—it's in the Marylebone Road, just off the Edgware Road. While I was there Garstang asked for me on the phone. He said he'd rung the housekeeper at my chambers and she'd told him I might be at Poloni's. He wanted to come along and see me when I got home. Well, I may be being quite unreasonable, but I'm rather anxious not to meet Garstang until I've looked into things and had a word with you. I'm sorry about that boy—Greville."

"What are you sorry about?" asked Macdonald.

"Why—he's dead, isn't he?"

"No. He's not dead and he's not going to die: who told you he was dead?"

There was only a blurred sound in reply: then a clatter, followed by the rising tone which announced that the receiver had been put down or the lines disconnected.

Macdonald swore softly and James looked at him with raised eyebrows. "That appears to be that—no more from a call box on the North Circular road—or will he come back?"

"There are moments when I could consign the automatic telephone system to perdition," said Macdonald. "You can neither argue with it nor ask why, who, or where."

During the next few minutes a lot of instructions went out from the telephone and radio system of Scotland Yard. Police cars in the northwestern area of London heard the call on their H.F. sets, and the cars began to patrol the length of the North Circular road from Willesden to New Southgate: police cars in the West One area turned towards Wimpole Street and Lancaster Gate Crescent. Macdonald, meanwhile, dialled Garstang's number, but he got no reply. Then a member of the Flying Squad came on the air from Wimpole Street.

"Calling from 500 Wimpole Street. The houseman says Dr. Garstang must be out; he doesn't answer his bell. Are we to search his flat—the houseman has a passkey. O.K.?"

"How the hell did he get out?" growled James. "You've got a man outside, haven't you?"

Macdonald sat and waited—it was one of those occasions when waiting paid a premium. Then the radio cackled another message.

"Garstang's flat is empty, but there's a fire escape leading from his bedroom window: it goes down to within nine feet of the ground to a yard at the back, and the yard connects with that bombed site in Harley Street. We're going round there now. Garstang must have got out that way. He didn't come out into Wimpole Street. Reporting again in five minutes."

"He's beaten it, Jock. He saw the red light and went," said James.

Macdonald sat thinking—thinking hard. "The North Circular road . . . I wonder," he said slowly. "I couldn't even swear that was Weldon's voice, the line was muffled . . . but what was the idea? Did he think we should go raging up there ourselves? But with this qualified automatic business, that call might just as well have come from Croydon, or anywhere else in the London area."

"En route for the London airport?" murmured James. "I believe he'd have got it taped. Back to Germany again somehow, and pick the old threads up again."

"Maybe, but not by air, to my way of thinking," said Macdonald. "An aircraft's like a trap to a fugitive. We'll warn all airports, but I don't think it'll be that way."

"It won't matter to Garstang what route he takes. He knows them all," said James. "If he could seep through German-occupied Europe in wartime, the frontier checks of today won't worry him any. And I bet the great idea behind that phone call was to make us believe Weldon's still alive, which he probably isn't."

"You don't know—and neither do I," said Macdonald, "but it's my belief that any fugitive who uses his brains won't try flying to get out of the country. The cross-channel boat would be a safer bet. It's easier to 'seep' from a seaport than an airport."

"Something in that," agreed James (who had plenty of experience of "seeping" on his own account), "and if he's done that, he's been clever. Held us up just long enough to miss the Victoria boat train—the Dunkirk Ferry. Was that the idea?"

Again Macdonald pondered. "It's by way of being an idea. . . . We can't be in more than one place at once, but I feel inclined to put my money on the night boat. I think you've got something when you maintain that Garstang will head for Germany—and crossing the Channel's his first lap."

"Well, he'll probably make it. He knows more about simple disguises than any man I know: he'll probably embark as an English porter and disembark as a French one," said James morosely, "and there's damn all we can do about it."

"You're wrong there. We can do quite a lot," said Macdonald. "We've got to wait for further reports, but I can ginger up the A.C. to ask for co-operation from the R.A.F. They're always drooling around with their night flying. They can oblige with transport if the right people ask them—and they can land in places the charter companies dare not touch."

"Fly to Dover? Well, that's the evening's great thought," said James more cheerfully. "If you make it snappy with the high-ups we can still beat the boat train hollow—and sort things out on the Dunkirk Ferry. Come to think of it, Dunkirk would be a lot more convenient to him than Calais. . . . He won't risk a sleeper, you know . . . he'll just walk on. . . ."

"If you must talk, talk to yourself," snapped Macdonald.

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It is not often that the C.I.D. asks for the co-operation of the R.A.F. in the matter of transport: once the decision had been taken the arrangements were of the simplest. Within half an hour of the request being made (with the authority of the Commissioner's Office behind it), Macdonald and Reeves and James were being driven out to Hendon in a police car which had a motorcycle escort preceding it to get the traffic-control officers on their toes. It was an exhilarating ride, speeding northwestwards to the Watford by-pass

turn from the Finchley Road, speeding through Hendon and Mill Hill with klaxon sounding and police lights up. Sometimes young hooligans catcalled at them, horrified drivers of other cars pulled into the kerb, bus drivers honked the V. signal on their horns, and pedestrians scuttled out of the way like rabbits.

"Road-hogging: doing exactly what we tell other people not to," said Reeves. "If we kill anybody will they bring it in as justifiable homicide?"

"Cut it out, mate," grinned the police driver, who was enjoying himself. "The only reason they pay me a bonus is that I can do this sort of thing without killing anybody. Here we are. Beaten my own record. I'd fly the plane for you if the Raf'd let me. I'm hot on night flying—and I tell you it's a damned sight harder than jumping the traffic lights on an arterial road. There's your bus: all warmed up. Oh boy, take me, too. . . ."

It was no sort of joy ride in the aircraft. This was no luxury passenger plane; there were hard let-down seats and no trimmings, and the pilot grinned from ear to ear at the thought of a bunch of policemen as passengers.

"Twenty minutes or so to Dover and land you on the old crashlanding ground—it's the nearest we can offer," he volunteered chattily. "The boys used to pancake their Spits there in '41—if they were lucky. They've laid on transport to get you to the harbour, and emergency landing lights—we hope. Nice night when you're through the overcast."

It was a lovely night: the waxing moon floated serenely over trails of whitest gossamer and starlight glimmered in the ethereal vault, high above the smoke and grime and ground mist of the mighty Wen. Reeves sat silent, not pretending to enjoy the outing: James folded his arms, closed his eyes, and accommodated his person to a hard seat and occasional air pockets. The only time Macdonald spoke was to James.

"Did they send you photographs of Dorward?" he asked.

James woke up and grinned unsympathetically. "Yes. They did. Plenty of 'em. So guess again."

A few minutes later James added: "Garstang's seen that boy's face—without the bandages. He was there when they changed the dressings. Funny to think of: we've none of us seen his face—not to say seen it."

"No," said Macdonald. Then he added: "What colour was Dorward's hair?"

"Black. Sorry to be so unobliging. Oh God, this is it. How often I've wished I had a removeable stomach. This boy's playing us up for fun. . . ."

The plane banked, turned, swooped: the passengers lurched, swallowed,

held on tight and endured it.

"No nice comforting air-hostess patter for the likes of us," said Reeves, "but they've obliged with the landing lights. Very good organisation in the time. Are we playing the goat, Jock? It's a long shot."

"It was the only available one," said Macdonald. "I may kick myself for doing the wrong thing, but I'd have drowned myself if I'd let it go without a try."

3

The C.I.D. men slipped inconspicuously through the customs sheds, after reporting to the local super, and having a look at the county men who were there to co-operate—if there was anything to co-operate about. They had beaten the boat train comfortably, but some passengers had already gone aboard.

The steamer at the quayside seemed to be garlanded in lights, green and red and white shining out from masthead, from fore and aft, from ports whose reflection glimmered gaily on wet gangway and quay and flickered in long ribbons of reflected radiance on the water which slapped choppily against the steamer's sides.

Macdonald left Reeves and James tucked away behind customs and passport officers respectively, reflecting that it certainly wasn't easy to evade the shepherding of authority on the approach to a Channel steamer:

"Passports ready, please"—pass between two watchful though seemingly futile officials who handled passports without appearing to examine them—and "Pass along please" again and hand the same passport to another officer whose examination of it appeared to be quite chancy or perfunctory—or both.

"Customs, please. Is this all your luggage? How much English money have you? Any jewellery?" The customs officers did at last look at their customers: their watchful eyes often seemed more concerned with the faces of those they questioned than with their baggage.

Macdonald, in borrowed oilskin and sou'wester, went and stood on the quayside and watched the passengers embark up the gangway. There weren't a great many—this cold December night held no attractions for tourists, and prosperous persons preferred the warm brevity of an air passage. A few porters carried baggage on board, and Macdonald found himself agreeing with

James that a porter's disguise would be a brilliant idea on a night crossing—the bowed figures with their rather shapeless clothes and peaked caps well down over their faces looked so anonymous.

Despite all his years of experience Macdonald was conscious of a stirring of excitement: he was taking a chance, backing a hunch, having arranged matters his own way. It might be a complete flop. There was a perfectly good chance that Weldon might be lying in a coma—or dead—in some hidden corner near the North Circular road: that Garstang might be walking round and round the Outer Circle. But there was still the slim chance that one—or both—might be aboard this steamer.

The arrivals thinned out, ceased. Reeves and James, also in oilskins, went aboard, and Macdonald went last up the gangway, just before it was withdrawn, and a few minutes later the vessel vibrated softly and began to slip away from the quayside. Reeves and James had their own instructions: one stood near the Passport Office, where passengers had to show their papers and get their landing tickets; one was searching the passengers' quarters, quietly and unobtrusively. Macdonald avoided the brightly lighted alleyways, saloons, and buffets. He moved forward, towards the shadows in the bows, disregarded by any member of the crew. Here in the open, quite unsheltered, a thin, cold mizzle of rain blew spitefully, and spray flew up when a choppy sea smacked the ship's sides as she cleared the shelter of harbour. Ashore, lights twinkled out, gay and confident—an abiding delight to any man who remembered the dour negative of wartime blackout. Macdonald leant over the rail and realised he was enjoying himself—which was no part of his programme. He would probably have to fly back in a few hours' time, having spent a futile vigil on the English Channel, and his first job tomorrow would be to interrogate the surly farmer who was being brought to London by Fordworthy on the night train.

As he pondered over his case, Macdonald became aware that the shore lights had faded out, that the vessel was lifting to a choppy sea, and that no passenger at all had chosen to brave the chill drizzle and cutting wind as the steamer left the shelter of the cliffs and ploughed stubbornly towards mid-channel. Moving aft a little, on a deck whose angle was abrupt and ever-changing, Macdonald found the shelter of the superstructure and leant his back against the bulkhead, where he was concealed by deep shadows. There was a high sea running now, and the sturdy craft was pitching as well as rolling: with legs well astride, back to the bulkhead, he swung easily with the

roll of the vessel and thanked his stars he had never felt seasick. In the spumey darkness he thought over his case, visualising every move in it with an imaginative faculty which was the essence of a detective's mind.

Macdonald believed his quarry was making a bolt for it—alarmed through no move of the C.I.D. The alarm, if it had been given, had probably been through the medium of a telephone message, an enquiry, perhaps: a name mentioned when that name was held to be long forgotten. If that theory were sound, there might well be two fugitives on the cross-channel steamer tonight.

Macdonald could produce a straight narrative, with logical reasons to explain every event in the tangled story he had pieced together: he believed he knew what had happened, from the night of the Plymouth blitz to the night when Dick Greville was knocked out at Paddington Station. But like every policeman, he knew that his own beliefs were valueless: what he wanted was evidence: he was here, on the Dunkirk Ferry steamer on a dirty December night, because he hoped for the one item of evidence which could give substance to his own theories.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MACDONALD had been standing in the darkness for over an hour, with the crash of the sea and the whistle of the wind as a background to his thoughts, before he realised that somebody else was moving forward of him, close to the rail, in the bleak bitterness of the night. He could just make out a man's form as a blacker blackness against the murky sky. At first he thought it might be one of the crew, but then he saw the man sit down on a bollard, with his arms braced against the rail. A thought flashed into Macdonald's mind: "I suppose a man who is a strong swimmer might risk jumping for it once we reached the lee of the jetty: on a night like this he wouldn't be seen and he might make it. For a powerful swimmer it wouldn't be any more hazardous than jumping from a train, and plenty of good blokes escaped that way."

Even as he thought of it, Macdonald hoped very much that nothing would compel him to jump overboard after a fugitive that night: no matter how near the shore, the prospect was singularly uninviting. His thoughts went to Reeves and James: he knew just what they would be trying to do if they had spotted their quarries on board: far from challenging them, the two wily detectives would be shepherding the suspects fore, towards Macdonald in the bows, not obviously, but by the method of showing that accommodation aft was being patrolled. The two C.I.D. men would urge their suspects forward in the manner of well-trained sheep dogs, with never a bark or a snap, just by patrolling aft, apparently seeing nothing, certainly saying nothing: just obtaining the required result by the menace of their presence.

And then, at long last, Macdonald believed his hunch was justifying itself: a second man had moved quietly forward, towards the unsheltered bows, whose only merit on this night was darkness and probable solitude.

Feeling silently in the shadows, Macdonald found the end of a rope locker —doubtless used as a seat by passengers on sunny summer days—and he crouched down beside it: from here he could see the blurred silhouette of the

figure squatting on the bollard. The second man stood still for a moment, feet well apart, braced to swim with the roll of the vessel; then, as another rain squall blew spitefully across the deck, he moved aft towards the bulkhead and sat down on the locker within a yard of where Macdonald was crouching. Leaning close to the shelter of the deckhouse, he struck a match between his cupped hands and for a second or two his face was illuminated fantastically as he lighted a cigarette: it was Garstang's face. Macdonald saw his sharp profile before the match blew out, and then saw it again more faintly in the red glow from his cigarette.

2

It was not only Macdonald who saw Garstang's face; the man sitting on the bollard stood up, steadied himself by the rails, and then moved aft towards the bulkhead and stood against it.

"So it's you, Garstang—going while the going's good."

The voice came clearly to Macdonald's ears, so close were all three men together in the shadows and spray and driven sleet.

"I don't know that the going's particularly good for either of us," retorted Garstang's ironical voice. "There wasn't time to argue. I realised—much too late—that there was a fifty-fifty chance of proving the truth if I got to a certain place before you did. Scotland Yard's out after both of us, as you probably realise—but I've been in a tighter corner than this and managed to wriggle out. I admit that it's a matter of which of us gets there first."

"I don't know what in hell you're talking about," rejoined the other, "but I've every reason to believe you knocked Greville out because he recognised you—remembered where he'd seen you before. But there's a chance I'm wrong, and I wasn't going to put my facts before the police till I'd proved my point. If you can prove to me that you weren't at Paddington Station last Monday evening I'll throw my hand in—the rest doesn't matter."

"It doesn't matter where I was last Monday evening," said Garstang impatiently. "The C.I.D. and M.I.5. are both barking up the wrong tree, though they've got the right facts if they could only correlate them."

"Why not put them wise, then?" demanded the other voice.

"Because they wouldn't believe me—any more than they'd believe you," retorted Garstang. "It's facts they want, and what they won't realise is that I

can get the facts if I'm allowed to set about it in my own way and in my own time. They know that an American named Dorward was mixed up in the origin of this story. Dorward—do you remember the name, Mr. Weldon?"

"No. I don't," retorted the other.

"Dorward . . . I never knew him by that name myself," went on Garstang calmly, "but I think he was the same man who helped get some refugees out of Germany almost under the nose of the Gestapo. He had two personalities, as it were, and he was known by two names: as an American businessman, he was Charles F. Dorward: as an intelligence agent and organiser of an escape route, he was Francesco Revari—that was the name I knew him by."

"I haven't an idea what you're driving at," said Weldon impatiently.

"It's very simple," said Garstang. "Dorward was a metallurgist, and an engineer. He had dealings with all the radio component experts in Germany before the war. He met you there—probably in Cologne. That's a guess on my part, but it's the only reasonable one. It accounts for everything else."

"You seem to be making up a story which is neither convincing nor lucid," said Weldon.

"That's all right," said Garstang calmly. "You can call my bluff—if bluff it is—simply by accompanying me to Cologne. I'm going to see an old fellow named Hans Schmidt. He was personal servant to Dr. van Hansen, and he—Schmidt—made it his business to know the face of every agent briefed for foreign intelligence work by Van Hansen. Van Hansen's dead, of course, but Schmidt's alive. I'm probably the only Briton who knows he's alive, and knows where to find him."

"I'm quite willing to believe that you know a damn' lot of things that M.I.5. would give their ears to know," retorted Weldon, "but if you're trying to entangle me in your 'intelligence work,' as you call it, you've made a very big mistake. I've never been in Germany in my life."

"All right. Then you needn't object to Schmidt having a look at you," said Garstang. "You all went by numbers, didn't you—no names mentioned? Schmidt was almost illiterate, and even numbers meant precious little to him, but he was invaluable to Van Hansen because he never forgot a face. It was my business at one time to collect such facts and transmit them: the only fact which I never passed on was the identity of Schmidt and the place he lived in after the war. I knew he was an honest old chap, and I didn't want to see him hounded down for crimes he wasn't responsible for."

He broke off, and there was no sound for a moment but the sea and the

wind.

Macdonald, crouching down beside the locker, knew that he could have touched either of the other men by reaching his hand out, so close were they all to one another against the bulkhead, and yet the darkness and sound of the wind and the waves came between them, separating them, so that the C.I.D. man had almost a moment of panic in the pause that followed Garstang's last words, lest some movement of either man had escaped him. The whole situation was fantastic: the details of the story which Macdonald had worked out in his own imagination were being filled in for him. In that pause, when the voices of wind and sea seemed to envelop and isolate each man, Macdonald remembered James's words about Garstang: "He's as near a thought reader as a man can be." A thought reader—yes—but also a man with a mort of bitter experience behind him.

It was Weldon's voice which spoke next: "I give you my word I haven't the faintest idea what you're driving at."

'Tour word—it's worth as much as mine to a detective," said Garstang bitterly, "but if you want me to believe you, get off this damned ship with me: give them the slip. It shouldn't be too hard on a night like this—and come and face old Hans Schmidt. If he says he doesn't know you, I'll admit I'm wrong—because there'll be no sense in any of it."

There was another pause, and then Garstang went on: "I'm arguing on the old motto that what one fool could do, another fool could do. I lived in Hitler's Germany for over a year, because I built up my cover story in advance. I think you did the same thing—in England. And you stayed on, living in the character you'd assumed. Only it happened that Dorward, when he took his son from Germany to England in 1941, happened to see you in Plymouth, and recognised you there. And it was you or him, wasn't it? You killed him there, but the blitz covered your crime. And the child escaped, up on to Roborough Down. It's very simple, really." Suddenly he laughed. "Don't imagine that the C.I.D. men haven't worked out some such sequence for themselves. That chap James sees all the possibilities, only he believes that I am the one in the woodpile. He'll pin it on to me too, if I don't get at the real facts——"

"And you hope to get out of it by involving me in this farrago of nonsense," broke in Weldon.

"As I see it, you're the only answer," said Garstang. "I'm banking on the fact that the boy was attacked because his memory came back in a flash—he recognised you in the train. He knew he'd seen you before—sometime,

somewhere—and he followed you up the platform. Perhaps he even remembered the name he heard his father call you, and spoke to you by that name. So you did the same thing you did when you were recognised before—twelve years ago. But Dick Greville didn't die. He's still alive, and that's why you're on this boat."

"On my soul, I've never heard such a packet of nonsense in my life," said the other, and the voice had lost its rancour and sounded merely amused. "I'm on this boat because I had the wits to realise you were making a bolt for it, Garstang. After you telephoned me this evening I went to Victoria on the off-chance and when I saw you on the boat train I also took a chance and followed you. I reckoned they'd cop you before you embarked—but they let you slip through. Well, you've challenged me: you say: 'Come and face old Hans Schmidt,' whoever he may be. Very well: I'll come—but don't think you can prove I'm anything you fancy. As you say—it's facts a detective wants: fancy's not going to help you."

"If you'll agree to come, I'll stand by what Hans says," cried Garstang. "I know he's honest. If he says he doesn't know your face, I'll admit I was wrong. Wrong all along the line."

"It looks to me as though we've both been making fools of ourselves in the detecting line," said Weldon easily. "The only thing I hope now is that we shan't be stopped at Dunkirk. Maybe I'm not the only chap who's got a bee in the bonnet over this business—to say nothing of you. Lord, what a night!—but I reckon we're nearly in port. Can you see a light there—over the larboard?"

Macdonald heard him move, saw him against the sky as he moved to the rail, then saw Garstang move to join him.

The climax came in a flash—quite literally. As Macdonald gathered himself to spring, a white swathe of light cut across the deck: it lit up the figures of the two men, as Weldon gripped Garstang round the knees and heaved him against the rail. He would have got him overboard in one powerful lift had it not been for Macdonald's leap. As it was the three men went down on the deck together in a wild melee, free-for-all, catch-as-catch-can, while the vessel rolled and pitched, and flung them mercilessly from side to side, like cargo gone adrift in the hold. It was Reeves and James who helped to sort them out.

"That's what you might call playing the stool-pigeon," said Garstang resignedly when he had recovered his wind. "I was certain he'd try to heave me over. He had to. Once I'd gone he'd have felt safe, because there wasn't any proof. Only old Hans Schmidt—and I'm the only person who could take you to Schmidt."

The searchlight still blazed whitely across the deck: Macdonald and James stood with their backs to the beam of light, but Garstang faced it, careless of being half blinded. It was James he spoke to next:

"You didn't trust me. You wouldn't trust me," he cried bitterly, "so I didn't trust you either," and then he turned to Macdonald. "I don't know what you thought about me: you're too infernally impartial. But I trusted you to be where you were needed, because I believe you're a very intelligent chap. I knew you were on this steamer somewhere, and when I started on my provocation story I took the chance that you were too competent to allow me to be chucked overboard. And I was right."

"As a vote of confidence, that one's about unique in my experience," said Macdonald. "Did you know I was just beside you, crouched down by that locker there?"

"No, I didn't know that, but I knew you were on the boat. I saw you by the gangplank," replied Garstang.

Macdonald chuckled. "Well, you've got to include the others in the testimonial. Reeves switched that searchlight on just in time for me to see that it was you who was being chucked overboard by Weldon, not vice versa, and seeing's believing. Come along to the bar and have a toddy: we're both colder than charity."

Over their good French cognac and scalding coffee, Macdonald asked: "How much of all that was fact and how much fancy, Dr. Garstang?"

"None of it was fancy, though the essentials were supposition," said Garstang. "When you've got unrelated facts, you've got to account for them somehow. You see, I based my whole reconstruction on the fact that Greville's memory was coming back to him. That was the operative factor in all my arguments. Greville remembered that house on the outskirts of Cologne, so I argued he'd been at school there and that he'd been of English parentage. But this evening—my God! only a few hours ago, it's incredible—James came along with his suggestion that the boy was American, and then James asked me if I remembered the name Dorward."

"And you obliged with a few words about the nature of memory and

associating factors," put in James.

Garstang nodded. "Yes—and the associating factor may be something seemingly irrelevant—a visual image, a smell, a sound——"

"A sound," interpolated Macdonald; "I've got a bit to add here. I heard you say that Dorward was associated with an Italian called Francesco Revari, or that he used that name himself. And for no earthly reason the title of a book flashed back into my mind—the Penguin which Dick Greville gave to Sally Dillon in the train."

"That's the incalculable way an extraneous circumstance can awaken memory," said Garstang. "The sound of the title of that book The *Franchise Affair* echoed the sound of a name I'd forgotten—Francesco Revari. So I'd got different facts milling around under the surface—a small boy at school in Cologne, an American named Dorward whom I couldn't place, and sundry facts I'd learnt in that hell of a year I'd spent in Hitler's Germany. And then I suddenly caught sight of that Penguin I'd bought because Sally said it was a good one—and something clicked in my mind. It was after eight o'clock then: I sat and did some hard thinking—in part muddled, in part based on facts. And eventually I rang up Weldon at Poloni's, asked him quite casually if he remembered Van Hansen, and told him I was catching the night boat to get across to Cologne. I'd never seen Weldon before today, but I knew it must be him—he was the only possibility; and I knew he'd be after me if he was the man I judged him to be."

"Couldn't you have told us——" began Macdonald, but Garstang flared back at him:

"No. I couldn't. I'd asked you to let me go to Cologne, and you'd refused. I'd had enough of James in the long ago. I tell you there are some things a man never forgets. You can tell me I was crazy: perhaps I was. I left a lot of things behind me thirteen years ago, including a capacity for believing in the infallibility of police enquiries. I chose to do this thing my own way. You've no grounds for complaint: it's worked, hasn't it?—and I can get Weldon identified for you if he's what I think him. And for the rest—be damned to all of you . . ."

He swayed in his chair and his head came forward on the table as Macdonald methodically caught the glasses out of the way.

"Suffering snakes!" cried James. "Don't tell me he's pulled a Goering on us."

"He's pulled nothing," said Macdonald. "He was very cold and very tired and strung up to a pitch of sheer unreason: he's probably not slept for nights——"

"And he's as drunk as a lord on one double brandy," said Reeves placidly. "Takes some chaps like that, especially when they're by way of being sensitive," he added as an aside to James.

"Oh, all right. I daresay I treated him a bit rough," said the latter, "but it's all worked out quite nicely as far as it goes. Though whether I'm any nearer to knowing what happened to Dorward I don't quite see."

"Perhaps young Greville will be able to tell you," said Macdonald.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

IT WAS SOME time later that Macdonald fulfilled a promise he had made to Sally Dillon to come and spend an evening at her flat before she left for her job in Switzerland, and "tell her all about it." Arrayed in her best frock, looking very charming and chic (and, to Macdonald's eyes, almost pathetically youthful), she sat him in the best chair and provided him with a glass of sherry.

"But you couldn't have believed that Dr. Garstang did it," she protested.

"Oh, couldn't I?" rejoined Macdonald cheerfully. "I was prepared to believe that any of you had done it—though I doubted your own capacity either to wield an iron bar in murderous fashion, or to empty a man's pockets efficiently. And the large writing lady seemed a most probable suspect when she failed to materialise in spite of all our appeals."

"Poor Miss Deraine!" said Sally. "The fog nearly finished her off with bronchial pneumonia, while you were thinking she was a fugitive from justice."

"Detectives can't afford to be charitable," said Macdonald. "We look on everybody with a coldly speculative eye." He paused a moment, and then added: "We certainly had a well-assorted collection to speculate over, by the time they were all listed: here they are in order of appearance: Miss Dillon, secretary to Dr. Garstang: Miss Deraine, an eminent archaeologist who had been investigating long barrows on Exmoor: Bert Lewis, a bookies' tout: Mr. Weldon, a radio engineer—with a character for reliability on British Railways: Dr. Garstang, an eminent psychiatrist: Walter Burrow, a Devonshire farmer noted for his interest in fat stock, and not averse from a flutter, whether on the race course or in his private life. And it was the latter who had the most obvious and substantial motive for wanting Dick Greville out of the way—though he proved to be a non-starter, in racing idiom."

Smiling at Sally's troubled face, Macdonald went on: "Don't think I'm being flippant about this. I'm not. It happened by chance that you became involved

in a very ugly story. I'm very sorry it so happened, but it's better for you to realise that detectives have to be impartial. Neither eminence in a profession, nor youth and seeming innocence, can be regarded as a complete bulwark against suspicion. You see, it's so easy to regard the obvious bad lot as the answer. That wretched youth Lewis looked an obvious suspect—but it wasn't he who tried to kill Dick Greville. It was the respectable, sleepy-looking businessman in the comer."

"When did you first realise who did it?" asked Sally. "And why?"

"It was a matter of assessing probabilities," said Macdonald slowly. "We had Dick Greville, laid out with an iron bar a few minutes after he had arrived in London. Later we had proof that Bert Lewis had crawled under a barrow and probably witnessed the attack. When Lewis himself was killed, we assumed that he had been trying to blackmail the murderer. But the more I thought about it, the less probable it seemed to me that Lewis had had time to crawl out from under the barrow and follow the attacker immediately. The constable who found Greville had seen two boys running away from the spot where Greville lay, and I was sure that Lewis wouldn't have left his hiding place when anybody could see him. The boys were found eventually, and from their evidence it's clear that only one man ran away into the fog from the place where the body lay. I believed Lewis couldn't have followed the would-be murderer immediately, but that he knew who the latter was and approached him in the hope of blackmail: that was a supposition, but it immediately suggested that Weldon, who travelled frequently to and from Reading, was the man recognised by Lewis. As Reeves said, the word 'recognition' was a sort of key word in this case: we believed that Greville had recognised somebody in the train. Your evidence partially, and Weldon's most definitely, pointed to Lewis as the man Greville spoke to. But during the time you were in the corridor, you couldn't give corroborative evidence about what happened in the compartment. Weldon had a clear field to tell us what he chose—but we don't count anything as a fact until we get it corroborated."

Again Macdonald paused, and then he said: "Let's try a reconstruction of the evidence. You were exceedingly valuable because you gave very clear evidence that Greville was in an abnormal state of mind: he was distressed and confused and those qualities became evident as the fog thickened—as though fog or smoke were concerned in his distress. It was through your evidence I traced Greville to his home and heard his history. Then Salcombe told me about Greville's recognition of certain things in Germany. It was this which

turned our attention very definitely in Garstang's direction. From what Salcombe said, it was plain that Greville's memory was coming back, in odd patches, mainly visually: it seemed probable that he could have recognised a face he had known as a child—and since he had been in Germany as a child, it might well have been Garstang's face."

Sally cried out in indignant protest: "I simply can't understand how you could have imagined for one minute that Dr. Garstang tried to kill that boy. He's the gentlest person on earth, I can't imagine that he'd ever kill anybody, for any reason."

"Let's get this straight, if only out of fairness to the Metropolitan Police," said Macdonald quietly. "When Dr. Garstang escaped from Germany, he had to kill a number of people who got in his way. He killed them quickly and quietly and skilfully: it was their life or his, and he got through—against every probability. We don't know the full details of how he escaped: we know that he had a very bad time, but to say that he's incapable of killing is just not true. I'm not being unfair over this, but I told you to start with we had to be impartial. When James argued that an attack of this kind must have been well within Garstang's experience, he was right. And you've got to remember this: our minds were considering some event in Greville's life which was connected with his childhood in Germany. The connection between Garstang and Germany couldn't be ignored."

"Yes. All right," said Sally unhappily, and Macdonald went on:

"There was no connection whatever that we could trace between Weldon and Germany, or Weldon and Greville. We went into it carefully enough: every event in Weldon's life was documented. We know now how it happened: how he exchanged identities with another man in 1936 and dug himself in as a skilled radio engineer and lived in England as an Englishman. It was all very cleverly done, with no loose ends to cause suspicion. You know, we tend to forget too often that there were fascists in England in the 30's."

Sally sat without a word, and Macdonald went on: "Let's take up the story from Greville's angle: he's been able to tell us quite a lot of it, and the rest will come in the course of time. The first thing that really jerked his memory to the surface was the sight of Weldon's face in the train when Greville travelled from London to Reading after his interview with the university people over two years ago."

Sally suddenly sat up. "I was sure something had happened then," she said. "I told Brian so."

"Well—I didn't overlook the possibility myself," said Macdonald. "Weldon travelled from Reading to London pretty regularly, on an evening train. Greville saw him on the platform on the first occasion, travelled to London with him, and was haunted by a feeling that he knew Weldon's face and connected it with something horrible."

"When had Dick seen Weldon before?" asked Sally.

"In Plymouth, in 1941. Dorward—Dick's father—had lived in Germany: his son was there with him in 1939 and went to school in Cologne after Dorward had become a widower. Dorward brought the boy to England in 1941 because he realised that America was bound to declare war against the Axis sometime. So it happened that on the night of the Plymouth blitz, the boy was in a hotel in Plymouth with his father, en route for a school in Cornwall, and that Weldon stayed in the same hotel. Dorward and Weldon recognised each other—they'd met in Germany some years before. Weldon shot Dorward, and the boy saw him do it. Dick Greville remembers it now: the hotel must have been hit almost immediately after the shot, and I think Dick must have been literally blown into the road. That's the last we know—or can conjecture—about him, until the shepherd found him on Roborough Down."

2

"What a story!" said Sally.

Macdonald nodded: "Yes, but it's a logical story: given the events we've lived through, it all pieces together—even to the fact that Weldon managed to poison himself after he'd been arrested, as other Germans did immediately after the war. The strangest part of it was that the train you travelled in stopped at Reading because of the fog, and Dick saw Weldon's face again. A lot of things had happened in the interval: Dick's period in Germany had begun to waken his memory, and two other things had happened—apparently unrelated things. Dick saw the advertisement which James put in the paper asking for information about Dorward. Dick recognised the name, but couldn't connect it up. He was really ill by this time, confused and wretched, because his mind was in a turmoil."

"I knew he was ill," said Sally unhappily. "He looked ghastly."

"If he'd only been to a psychiatrist months before, he could have got the whole thing straightened out by analysis," said Macdonald, "but he'd got into a

state when he was afraid to subject himself to analysis. He knew there was some horror behind him, and he had an abiding fear that he'd be proved to be a German."

"Poor Dick," said Sally, but Macdonald replied briskly:

"Don't feel too bad about it. He's been lucky in the long run. He'll be all right now. Well, I've told you most of the story, but I'd like to tell you one very odd thing that happened in the train, and which suddenly jerked Dick Greville into remembering names he'd forgotten. His father—Dorward—sometimes used the name Francesco Revari: it was the name of an Italian engineer he was associated with." He paused, but Sally made no reply, and Macdonald went on: "What was the title of the famous Penguin which Dick gave you, and which was stolen from your room—the book he'd scribbled in, as though he were trying to connect up sounds?"

"Heavens!" she cried. "The Franchise Affair. You mean the sound of the title made a sort of echo in his mind and he was groping after the name?"

"That's it. Miss Deraine has helped us here: when you were in the corridor of the train, she saw Dick Greville scribbling in the book and obviously worrying himself to death about something. What he was trying to do was to sort out the confused sounds which were in his mind."

"And you think that Weldon came here and stole the book from my room because he'd seen Dick scribbling in it?" asked Sally.

"Yes. You see, he couldn't steal the book in the train because he was being watched, and he got your name from the Penguin you gave to Dick," replied Macdonald. "When one talks about it afterwards, like this, there seems a certain sort of inevitability about it all—it's almost obvious. But the whole thing was sheer confusion at the beginning. I had no reason to suspect either Weldon or Garstang, but circumstances made it possible for either of them to have come here that evening you and Miss Maine were out, to break in and steal the book. Similarly, either of them could have met Bert Lewis in the train the next morning—and pushed him on to the line. Garstang always goes out early, for his trot round Regent's Park, and Weldon goes out early too. They both live by themselves, in such a way that nobody notices their comings and goings. In addition to this, we had the added possibility that Walter Burrow had been mixed up in it—and I still have a sneaking belief that Burrow would have put Greville out—if he'd dared."

Again Sally sat silent for a moment, and then she said: "The thing which shattered me most was that Dr. Garstang *did* go to Paddington that evening.

When Libby told me about it I felt simply awful. . . ."

"He went on the chance of seeing you walk up the platform," said Macdonald. "It's just one of the things a man is capable of doing when he's in love. And having done it (as he'd doubtless done several times before when you'd been home for a week end), he wasn't going to let you know he'd done it." He broke off for a minute, and then added: "I think it's only fair to get this straight. Dr. Garstang, as a practising psychiatrist, is one of the most eminent men in his profession. Perhaps his success is due, in some part, to the fact that he's a very sensitive man, and one who has suffered a great deal in his time. Because he is ultrasensitive, he couldn't bear the thought that you, who are young enough to be his daughter, should become aware that he'd fallen in love with you: and to conceal the fact that he'd gone to Paddington to catch a glimpse of you, he risked drawing very grave suspicion on himself."

"I feel dreadful about it," said Sally, but Macdonald only laughed.

"Human nature being what it is, I dare say you'll feel 'dreadful' about other men besides Dr. Garstang before you get yourself happily married and settled. But you can take a crumb of comfort from the fact that Garstang is happier in his mind in certain other respects. He and James have talked over all their old misunderstandings, and, in a sense, have apologised to one another: they've realised that each had done the other an injustice."

"Thanks for telling me that," said Sally, "and now, I must ask—I'm certain everybody asks you the same questions—when did you first suspect Weldon, first say to yourself: 'He's phoney'?"

"The first thing I noticed that made me wonder a bit was this," said Macdonald: "he said he'd been dog-tired and that he went to sleep in the train—but the amount he'd noticed in his sleep was surprising. And then he described Lewis rather well: he said: 'He sat with his hands in his pockets. I noticed that, because I expected his hands to be in my pockets any moment.' And yet when he went to the mortuary, he identified Lewis by his hands—white, podgy hands. Those are the sort of small discrepancies we always look out for. Reeves and I were certain Weldon was the culprit—certain in our own minds—but we'd not got a thing you could call positive evidence until we saw him try to throw Garstang overboard. And if you want to know in what way detective technique and experience helped to sort things out, the simplest point I can make is this: I believed the origin of the story was something that happened in Germany: now Garstang lived in Germany from 1939 to the end of 1940. The nazi bosses must have known all about him eventually, after he'd

got out. Well, my plan was to see to it that all contacts in the case saw Garstang, and were seen by him. I argued that if the story had originated in Germany, the sight and presence of Garstang at our consultations might rattle the guilty party up a bit. In other words, still believing that Weldon was guilty, I hoped the sight of Garstang might shake him and cause him to do something rash, because Garstang did know a great deal about what went on in Germany."

"But Dr. Garstang didn't recognise Weldon."

"No. He'd never seen him: but Weldon knew who Garstang was, and how much he might know—and Weldon decided to quit while he could. It was all a bit of a mix-up at the end—but we got the evidence we needed."

Sally sighed. "I think I get the idea—though I haven't a detecting sort of mind. I shall always connect this story with that ghastly fog. I've never seen such a fog. It was horrible."

"It was: and it gave us a great deal of trouble," said Macdonald. "Our men can't be expected to keep tabs on suspected parties in weather like that. But you're going to Switzerland, and you won't have any fogs there."

Sally suddenly dimpled. "You know we're planning to have Dick out there when he can travel—right away from the fog and gloom and smoke that reminded him of something black and dreadful . . . ?"

"Yes. I hope you'll all have a very happy time to make up for the dark days. . . . 'But with black Air accompanied. With damps and dreadful gloom . . .' Do you remember that?"

"It's Milton, isn't it? *Paradise Lost.* It's a bit. . . melancholy."

"But he wrote *Paradise Regained*, too," said Macdonald.

And this time Sally laughed outright.

THE END